COMFORT FOUND IN GOOD OLD BOOKS

GEORGE HAMLIN FITCH

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SHAKESPEARES

COMEDIES, HISTORIES, & TRAGEDIES.

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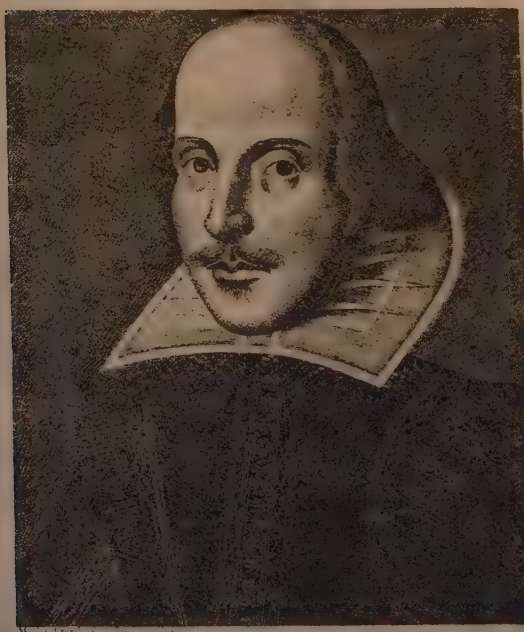

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COMFORT FOUND IN GOOD OLD BOOKS

BY
GEORGE HAMLIN FITCH
AUTHOR OF
"GREAT SPIRITUAL WRITERS OF AMERICA"
"MODERN ENGLISH BOOKS OF POWER"
"THE CRITIC IN THE OCCIDENT"
"THE CRITIC IN THE ORIENT"

I love everything that's old:
old friends, old times, old manners,
old books, old wine.
—Goldsmith

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TO THE MEMORY
OF MY SON HAROLD,
MY BEST CRITIC, MY OTHER
SELF, WHOSE DEATH HAS
TAKEN THE LIGHT
OUT OF MY
LIFE.

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Introduction

THESE short essays on the best old books in the world were inspired by the sudden death of an only son, without whom I had not thought life worth living. To tide me over the first weeks of bitter grief I plunged into this work of reviewing the great books from the Bible to the works of the eighteenth century writers. The suggestion came from many readers who were impressed by the fact that in the darkest hour of sorrow my only comfort came from the habit of reading, which Gibbon declared he "would not exchange for the wealth of the Indies." If these essays induce any one to cultivate the reading habit, which has been so great a solace to me in time of trouble, then I shall feel fully repaid.

This book is not intended for those who have had literary training in high school or university. It was planned to meet the wants of that great American public which yearns for knowledge and culture, but does not know how to set about acquiring it. For this reason I have discussed the great books of the world

from De Quincey's standpoint of the literature of power, as distinguished from the literature of knowledge. By the literature of power the author of the Confessions of an English Opium Eater *meant books filled with that emotional quality which lifts the reader out of this prosaic world into that spiritual life, whose dwellers are forever young.*

No book has lived beyond the age of its author unless it were full of this spiritual force which endures through the centuries. The words of the Biblical writers, of Thomas à Kempis, Milton, Bunyan, Dante and others who are discussed in this book, are charged with a spiritual potency that moves the reader of today as they have moved countless generations in the past. Could one wish for a more splendid immortality than this, to serve as the stimulus to ambitious youth long after one's body has moldered in the dust?

Even the Sphinx is not so enduring as a great book, written in the heart's blood of a man or woman who has sounded the deeps of sorrow only to rise up full of courage and faith in human nature.

Comfort Found in Good Old Books

Nothing Soothes Grief Like Sterling Old Books — How the Sudden Death of an Only Son Proved the Value of the Reading Habit.

For the thirty years that I have spoken weekly to many hundreds of readers of The Chronicle *through its book review columns, it has been my constant aim to preach the doctrine of the importance of cultivating the habit of reading good books, as the chief resource in time of trouble or sickness. This doctrine I enforced, because for many years reading has been my principal recreation, and I have proved its usefulness in broadening one's view of life and in storing up material from the world's greatest writers which can be recalled at will. But it never occurred to me that this habit would finally come to mean the only thing that makes life worth living.*

When one passes the age of forty he begins to build a certain scheme for the years to come. That scheme may involve many things—domestic life, money-getting, public office, charity, education. With me it included mainly literary work, in which I was deeply interested, and close companionship with an only son, a boy of such lovable personal qualities that he had endeared himself to me from his very childhood. My relations with my son Harold were not those of the stern parent and the timid son, as Edmund Gosse has depicted with so much unconscious pathos in his "Father and Son." Rather it was the relation of elder brother and younger brother.

Hence, when only ten days ago this close and tender association of many years was broken by death — swift and wholly unexpected, as a bolt from cloudless skies — it seemed to me for a few hours as if the keystone of the arch of my life had fallen and everything lay heaped in ugly ruin. I had waited for him on that Friday afternoon until six o'clock. Friday is my day off, my one holiday in a week of hard work, when my son always dined with me and then accompanied me to the theater or other entertainment. When he did not appear at six o'clock in the evening I left a note saying I had gone to our usual restau-

rant. That dinner I ate alone. When I returned in an hour it was to be met with the news that Harold lay cold in death at the very time I wrote the note that his eyes would never see.

When the first shock had passed came the review of what was left of life to me. Most of the things which I had valued highly for the sake of my son now had little or no worth for me; but to take up again the old round of work, without the vivid, joyous presence of a companion dearer than life itself, one must have some great compensations; and the chief of these compensations lay in the few feet of books in my library case — in those old favorites of all ages that can still beguile me, though my head is bowed in the dust with grief and my heart is as sore as an open wound touched by a careless hand.

For more than a dozen years in the school vacations and in my midsummer holidays my son and I were accustomed to take long tramps in the country. For five of these years the boy lived entirely in the country to gain health and strength. Both he and his older sister, Mary, narrowly escaped death by pneumonia in this city, so I transferred them to Angwin's, on Howell Mountain, an ideal place in a grove of pines — a ranch in the winter and a

summer resort from May to November. There the air was soft with the balsam of pine, and the children throve wonderfully. Edwin Angwin was a second father to them both, and his wife was as fond as a real mother. For five years they remained on the mountain. Mary developed into an athletic girl, who became a fearless rider, an expert tennis player and a swimmer, who once swam two miles at Catalina Island on a foolish wager. She proved to be a happy, wholesome girl, an ideal daughter, but marriage took her from me and placed half the continent between us. Harold was still slight and fragile when he left the country, but his health was firmly established and he soon became a youth of exceptional strength and energy.

Many memories come to me now of visits paid to Angwin's in those five years. Coming home at three o'clock on winter mornings after a night of hard work and severe nervous strain, I would snatch two or three hours' sleep, get up in the chill winter darkness and make the tedious five-hour journey from this city to the upper Napa Valley, in order to spend one day with my boy and his sister. The little fellow kept a record on a calendar of the dates of these prospective visits, and always had some dainty for me — some bird

or game or choice fruit which he knew I relished.

Then came the preparatory school and college days, when the boy looked forward to his vacations and spent them with me in single-minded enjoyment that warmed my heart like old wine. By means of constant talks and much reading of good books I labored patiently to develop his mind, and at the same time to keep his tastes simple and unspoiled. In this manner he came to be a curious mixture of the shrewd man of the world and the joyous, care-free boy. In judgment and in mental grasp he was like a man of thirty before he was eighteen, yet at the same time he was the spontaneous, fun-loving boy, whose greatest charm lay in the fact that he was wholly unconscious of his many gifts. He drew love from all he met, and he gave out affection as unconsciously as a flower yields its perfume.

In college he tided scores of boys over financial straits; his room at Stanford University was open house for the waifs and strays who had no abiding-place. In fact, so generous was his hospitality that the manager of the college dormitory warned him one day in sarcastic vein that the renting of a room for a term did not include the privilege of taking in lodgers. His friends were of all classes.

He never joined a Greek letter fraternity because he did not like a certain clannishness that marked the members; but among Fraternity men as well as among Barbarians he counted his close associates by the score. He finished his college course amid trying circumstances, as he was called upon to voice the opinion of the great body of students in regard to an unjust ruling of the faculty that involved the suspension of many of the best students in college. And through arbitrary action of the college authorities his degree was withheld for six months, although he had passed all his examinations and had had no warnings of any condemnation of his independent and manly course as an editor of the student paper. Few boys of his age have ever shown more courage and tact than he exhibited during that trying time, when a single violent editorial from his pen would have resulted in the walking out of more than half the university students.

Then came his short business life, full of eager, enthusiastic work for the former college associate who had offered him a position on the Board of Fire Underwriters. Even in this role he did not work so much for himself as to "make good," and thus justify the confidence of the dear friend who stood sponsor

for him. Among athletes of the Olympic Club he numbered many warm friends; hundreds of young men in professional and business life greeted him by the nickname of "Mike," which clung to him from his early freshman days at Stanford. The workers and the idlers, the studious and the joy-chasers, all gave him the welcome hand, for his smile and his gay speech were the password to all hearts. And yet so unspoiled was he that he would leave all the gayety and excitement of club life to spend hours with me, taking keen zest in rallying me if depressed or in sharing my delight in a good play, a fine concert, a fierce boxing bout or a spirited field day. Our tastes were of wide range, for we enjoyed with equal relish Mascagni's "Cavalleria," led by the composer himself, or a championship prize-fight; Margaret Anglin's somber but appealing Antigone or a funny "stunt" at the Orpheum.

Harold's full young life was also strongly colored by his close newspaper associations. The newspaper life, like the theatrical, puts its stamp on those who love it, and Harold loved it as the child who has been cradled in the wings loves the stage and its folk. Ever since he wore knickerbockers he was a familiar figure in the The Chronicle *editorial rooms. He knew the work of all departments of the*

paper, and he was a keen critic of that work. He would have made a success in this field, but he felt the work was too exacting and the reward too small for the confinement, the isolation and the nervous strain. After the fire he rendered good service when competent men were scarce, and in the sporting columns his work was always valued, because he was an expert in many kinds of sports and he was always scrupulously fair and never lost his head in any excitement. The news of his death caused as deep sorrow in The Chronicle *office as would the passing away of one of the oldest men on the force.*

Now that this perennial spirit of youth is gone out of my life, the beauty of it stands revealed more clearly. Gone forever are the dear, the fond-remembered holidays, when the long summer days were far too short for the pleasure that we crowded into them. Gone are the winter walks in the teeth of the blustering ocean breezes, when we "took the wind into our pulses" and strode like Berserkers along the gray sand dunes, tasting the rarest spirit of life in the open air. Gone, clean gone, those happy days, leaving only the precious memory that wets my eyes that are not used to tears.

And so, in this roundabout way, I come back to my library shelves, to urge upon you who

now are wrapped warm in domestic life and love to provide against the time when you may be cut off in a day from the companionship that makes life precious. Take heed and guard against the hour that may find you forlorn and unprotected against death's malignant hand. Cultivate the great worthies of literature, even if this means neglect of the latest magazine or of the newest sensational romance. Be content to confess ignorance of the ephemeral books that will be forgotten in a single half year, so that you may spend your leisure hours in genial converse with the great writers of all time. Dr. Eliot of Harvard recently aroused much discussion over his "five feet of books." Personally, I would willingly dispense with two-thirds of the books he regards as indispensable. But the vital thing is that you have your own favorites—books that are real and genuine, each one brimful of the inspiration of a great soul. Keep these books on a shelf convenient for use, and read them again and again until you have saturated your mind with their wisdom and their beauty. So may you come into the true Kingdom of Culture, whose gates never swing open to the pedant or the bigot. So may you be armed against the worst blows that fate can deal you in this world.

Who turns in time of affliction to the magazines or to those books of clever short stories which so amuse us when the mind is at peace and all goes well? No literary skill can bind up the broken-hearted; no beauty of phrase satisfy the soul that is torn by grief. No, when our house is in mourning we turn to the Bible first — that fount of wisdom and comfort which never fails him who comes to it with clean hands and a contrite heart. It is the medicine of life. And after it come the great books written by those who have walked through the Valley of the Shadow, yet have come out sweet and wholesome, with words of wisdom and counsel for the afflicted. One book through which beats the great heart of a man who suffered yet grew strong under the lash of fate is worth more than a thousand books that teach no real lesson of life, that are as broken cisterns holding no water, when the soul is athirst and cries out for refreshment.

This personal, heart-to-heart talk with you, my patient readers of many years, is the first in which I have indulged since the great fire swept away all my precious books — the hoarded treasures of forty years. Against my will it has been forced from me, for I am like a sorely wounded animal and would fain nurse my pain alone. It is written in the first bit-

terness of a crushing sorrow; but it is also written in the spirit of hope and confidence — the spirit which I trust will strengthen me to spend time and effort in helping to make life easier for some poor boys in memory of the one dearest boy who has gone before me into that "undiscovered country," where I hope some day to meet him, with the old bright smile on his face and the old firm grip of the hand that always meant love and tenderness and steadfast loyalty.

Among men of New England strain like myself it is easy to labor long hours, to endure nervous strain, to sacrifice comfort and ease for the sake of their dear ones; but men of Puritan strain, with natures as hard as the flinty granite of their hillsides, cannot tell their loved ones how dear they are to them, until Death lays his grim hand upon the shoulder of the beloved one and closes his ears forever to the words of passionate love that now come pouring in a flood from our trembling lips.

San Francisco, October 9, 1910.

COMFORT FOUND IN GOOD OLD BOOKS

The Greatest Book in the World

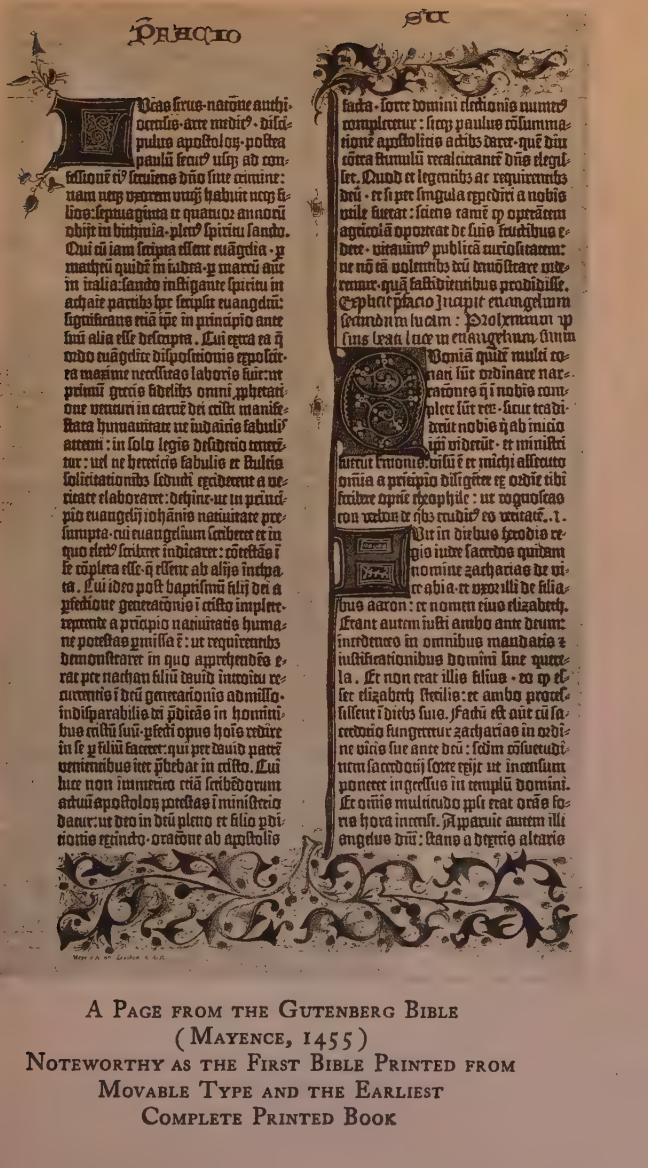
How to Secure the Best that is in the Bible — Much Comfort in Sorrow and Stimulus to Good Life may be Found in Its Study.

Several readers of my tribute to my dead son Harold have asked me to specify, in a series of short articles, some of the great books that have proved so much comfort to me in my hours of heart-breaking sorrow. In this age of cheap printing devices we are in danger of being overwhelmed by a great tide of books that are not real books at all. Out of a hundred of the new publications that come monthly from our great publishing houses, beautifully printed and bound and often ornamented with artistic pictures, not more than ten will live longer than a year, and not more than a single volume will retain

any life ten years from the time it first saw the light. Hence it behooves us to choose wisely, for our lives are limited to the Psalmist's span of years, and there is no hope of securing the length of days of Methuselah and his kindred.

Business or professional cares and social duties leave the average man or woman not over an hour a day that can be called one's very own; yet most of the self-appointed guides to reading — usually college professors or teachers or literary men with large leisure — write as though three or four hours a day for reading was the rule, rather than the exception. In my own case it is not unusual for me to spend six hours a day in reading, but it would be folly to shut my eyes to the fact that I am abnormal, an exception to the general rule. Hence in talking about books and reading I am going to assume that an hour a day is the maximum at your disposal for reading books that are real literature.

And in this preliminary article I would like to enforce as strongly as words can express it my conviction that knowledge and culture should be set apart widely. In the reading that I shall recommend, culture of the mind and the heart comes first of all.



A Page from the Gutenberg Bible
(Mayence, 1455)
Noteworthy as the First Bible Printed from
Movable Type and the Earliest
Complete Printed Book

This is more valuable than rubies, a great possession that glorifies life and opens our eyes to beauties in the human soul, as well as in nature, to all of which we were once blind and dumb. And culture can be built on the bare rudiments of education, at which pedagogues and pedants will sneer. Some of the most truly cultured men and women I have ever known have been self-educated; but their minds were opened to all good books by their passion for beauty in every form and their desire to improve their minds. Among the scores of letters that have come to me in my bereavement and that have helped to save me from bitterness, was one from a woman in a country town of California. After expressing her sympathy, greater than she could voice in words, she thanked me warmly for what I had said about the good old books. Then she told of her husband, the well-known captain of an army transport, who went to sea from the rugged Maine coast when a lad of twelve, with only scanty education, and who, in all the years that followed on many seas, laboriously educated himself and read the best books.

In his cabin, she said, were well-worn copies of Shakespeare, Gibbon, Thackeray,

Dickens, Burns, and others. These great worthies he had made a part of himself by constant reading. Of course, the man who thinks that the full flower of education is the ability to "parse" a sentence, or to express a commonplace thought in grandiloquent language that will force his reader to consult a dictionary for the meaning of unusual words—such a man and pedant would look upon this old sea captain as uneducated. But for real culture of mind and soul give me the man who has had many solitary hours for thought, with nothing but the stars to look down on him; who has felt the immensity of sea and sky, with no land and no sail to break the fearful circle set upon the face of the great deep.

In the quest for culture, in the desire to improve your mind by close association with the great writers of all literature, do not be discouraged because you may have had little school training. The schools and the universities have produced only a few of the immortal writers. The men who speak to you with the greatest force from the books into which they put their living souls have been mainly men of simple life. The splendid stimulus that they give to every

reader of their books sprang from the education of hard experience and the culture of the soul. The writers of these books yearned to aid the weak and heavy-laden and to bind up the wounds of the afflicted and sorely stricken. Can one imagine any fame so great or so enduring as the fame of him who wrote hundreds of years ago words that bring tears to one's eyes today — tears that give place to that passionate ardor for self-improvement, which is the beginning of all real culture?

And another point is to guard against losing the small bits of leisure scattered through the day. Don't take up a magazine or a newspaper when you have fifteen minutes or a half hour of leisure alone in your room. Keep a good book and make it a habit to read so many pages in the time that is your own. Cultivate rapid reading, with your mind intent on your book. You will find in a month that you have doubled your speed and that you have fixed in your mind what you have read, and thus made it a permanent possession. If you persist in this course, reading always as though you had only a few moments to spare and concentrating your mind on the page before you, you will find

that reading becomes automatic and that you can easily read thirty pages where before ten pages seemed a hard task.

Long years ago it was my custom to reach home a half hour before dinner. To avoid irritability which usually assailed me when hungry, I took up Scott and read all the Waverley novels again. It required barely a year, but those half hours made at the end of the period eight whole days. In the same way in recent years I have reread Dickens, Thackeray, Kipling and Hardy, because I wanted to read something as recreation which I would not be forced to review. Constant practice in rapid reading has given me the power of reading an ordinary novel and absorbing it thoroughly in four hours. This permits of no dawdling, but one enjoys reading far better when he does it at top speed.

Macaulay in his memoirs tells of the mass of reading which he did in India, always walking up and down his garden, because during such exercise his mind was more alert than when sitting at a desk.

Many will recall Longfellow's work on the translation of Dante's *Inferno*, done in the fifteen minutes every morning which was required for his chocolate to boil.

Every one remembers the "Pigskin Library" which Colonel Roosevelt carried with him to Africa on his famous hunting trip. The books were all standard works of pocket size, bound in pigskin, which defies sweat, blood, dirt or moisture, and takes on in time the rich tint of a well-used saddle. Roosevelt read these books whenever he chanced to have a few minutes of leisure. And it seems to me the superior diction of his hunting articles, which was recognized by all literary critics, came directly from this constant reading of the best books, joined with the fact that he had ample leisure for thought and wrote his articles with his own hand. Dictation to a stenographer is an easy way of preparing "copy" for the printer, but it is responsible for the decadence of literary style among English and American authors.

In selecting the great books of the world place must be given first of all, above and beyond all, to the Bible. In the homely old King James' version, the spirit of the Hebrew prophets seems reflected as in a mirror. For the Bible, if one were cast away on a lonely island, he would exchange all other books; from the Bible alone could such a castaway get comfort and help. It

is the only book in the world that is new every morning: the only one that brings balm to wounded hearts.

Looked upon merely as literature, the Bible is the greatest book in the world; but he is dull and blind indeed who can study it and not see that it is more than a collection of supremely eloquent passages, written by many hands. It is surcharged with that deep religious spirit which marked the ancient Hebrews as a people set apart from alien races. Compare the Koran with the Bible and you will get a measure of the fathomless height this Book of books is raised above all others. Those who come to it with open minds and tender hearts, free from the worldliness that callouses so many fine natures, will find that in very truth it renews their strength; that it makes their spirit "mount up with wings as an eagle."

First read the Old Testament, with its splendid imagery, its noble promises of rewards to those who shall be lifted out of the waters of trouble and sorrow. Then read the New Testament, whose simplicity gains new force against this fine background of promise and fulfilment. If the verbiage of many books of the Old Testament repels you, then get a single volume like

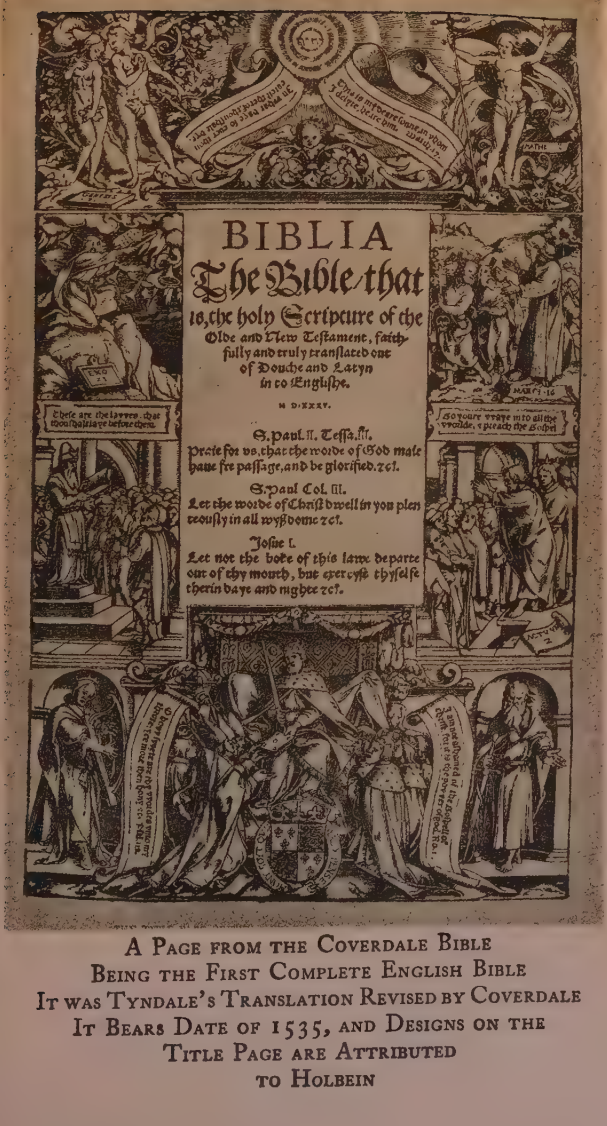
The Soul of the Bible, arranged by Ulysses Pierce and printed by the American Unitarian Association of Boston. This volume of 500 pages contains the real essence of the Bible, revealed in all the beauty of incomparable phrase and sublime imagery; sounding the deeps of sorrow, mounting to the heights of joy; traversing the whole range of human life and showing that God is the only refuge for the sorely afflicted. How beautiful to the wounded heart the promise that always "underneath are the everlasting arms."

Read *The Soul of the Bible* carefully, and make it a part of your mental possessions. Then you will be ready to take up the real study of the Bible, which can never be finished, though your days may be long in the land. This study will take away the stony heart and will give you in return a heart of flesh, tender to the appeals of the sick and the sorrowing. If you have lost a dear child, the daily reading of the Bible will gird you up to go out and make life worth living for the orphan and the children of poverty and want, who so often are robbed from the cradle of their birthright of love and sunshine and opportunity for development of body and mind.

If you have lost father or mother, then it will make your sympathy keen for the halting step of age and the pathetic eyes, in which you see patient acceptance of the part of looker-on in life, the only role left to those who have been shouldered out of the active ways of the world to dream of the ardent love and the brave work of their youth. So the reading of the Bible will gradually transmute your spirit into something which the worst blows of fate can neither bend nor break. To guard your feet on the stony road of grief you will be "shod with iron and brass." Then, in those immortal words of Zophar to Job:

> "Then shall thy life be clearer than the noonday;
> Though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning,
> And because there is hope, thou shalt be secure;
> Yea, thou shalt look about thee, and shalt take thy rest in safety;
> Thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid."

To this spiritual comfort will be added gain in culture through close and regular reading of the Bible. Happy are they who commit to the wax tablets of childish memory the great passages of the Old Testa-



A Page from the Coverdale Bible
Being the First Complete English Bible
It was Tyndale's Translation Revised by Coverdale
It Bears Date of 1535, and Designs on the
Title Page are Attributed
to Holbein

ment. Such was Ruskin, who owed much of his splendid diction to early study of the Bible. Such also were Defoe and De Quincey, two men of widely different gifts, but with rare power of moving men's souls. The great passages of the Bible have entered into the common speech of the plain people of all lands; they have become part and parcel of our daily life. So should we go to the fountainhead of this unfailing source of inspiration and comfort and drink daily of its healing waters, which cleanse the heart and make it as the heart of a little child.

Shakespeare Stands Next to the Bible

Hints on the Reading of Shakespeare's Plays—How to Master the Best of These Dramas, the Finest of Modern Work.

Next to the Bible in the list of great books of the world stands Shakespeare. No other work, ancient or modern, can challenge this; but, like the Bible, the great plays of Shakespeare are little read. Many of today prefer to read criticism about the dramatist rather than to get their ideas at first hand from his best works. Others spend much time on such nonsense as the Baconian theory—hours which they might devote to a close and loving study of the greatest plays the world has ever seen. Such a study would make the theory that the author of the *Essays* and the *Novum Organum* wrote

Hamlet or *Othello* seem like midsummer madness. As well ask one to believe that Herbert Spencer wrote *Pippa Passes* or *The Idyls of the King*.

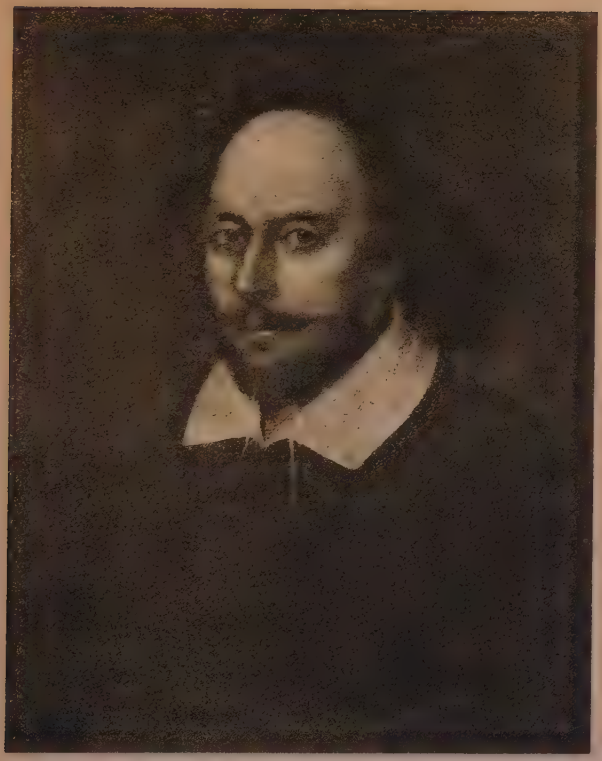
The peculiarity of Shakespeare's genius was that it reached far beyond his time; it makes him modern today, when the best work of his contemporaries, like Ben Jonson, Marlowe and Ford, are unreadable. Any theatrical manager of our time who should have the hardihood to put on the stage Jonson's *The Silent Woman* or Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* would court disaster. Yet any good actor can win success with Shakespeare's plays, although he may not coin as much money as he would from a screaming farce or a homespun play of American country life.

Those who have heard Robert Mantell in Lear, Richard III, Hamlet or Iago can form some idea of the vitality and the essential modernism of Shakespeare's work. The good actor or the good stage manager cuts out the coarse and the stupid lines that may be found in all Shakespeare's plays. The remainder reaches a height of poetic beauty, keen insight into human nature and dramatic perfection which no modern work even approaches. Take an unlet-

tered spectator who may never have heard Shakespeare's name and he soon becomes thrall to the genius of this great Elizabethan wizard, whose master hand reaches across the centuries and moves him to laughter and tears. The only modern who can claim a place beside him is Goethe, whose *Faust*, whether in play or in opera, has the same deathless grip on the sympathies of an audience.

And yet in taking up Shakespeare the reader who has no guide is apt to stumble at the threshold and retire without satisfaction. As arranged, the comedies are given first, and it is not well to begin with Shakespeare's comedies. In reading any author it is the part of wisdom to begin with his best works. Our knowledge of Shakespeare is terribly meager, but we know that he went up to London from his boyhood home at Stratford-on-Avon, that he secured work in a playhouse, and that very soon he began to write plays. To many this sudden development of a raw country boy into a successful dramatist seems incredible.

Yet a similar instance is afforded by Alexander Dumas, the greatest imaginative writer of his time, and the finest story-teller



CHANDOS' PORTRAIT OF SHAKESPEARE
SO CALLED BECAUSE IT WAS OWNED BY THE
DUKE OF CHANDOS—PROBABLY
PAINTED AFTER DEATH FROM PERSONAL DESCRIPTION
THE ORIGINAL IS IN THE NATIONAL
GALLERY, LONDON

in all French literature. Dumas had little education, and his work, when he went to Paris from his native province, was purely clerical, yet he read very widely, and the novels and romances of Scott aroused his imagination. But who taught Dumas the perfect use of French verse? Who gave him his prose style as limpid and flowing as a country brook? These things Dumas doesn't think it necessary to explain in his voluminous memoirs. They are simply a part of that literary genius which is the despair of the writer who has not the gift of style or the power to move his readers by creative imagination.

In the same way, had Shakespeare left any biographical notes, we should see that this raw Stratford youth unconsciously acquired every bit of culture that came in his way; that his mind absorbed like a sponge all the learning and the literary art of his famous contemporaries. The Elizabethan age was charged with a peculiar imaginative power; the verse written then surpasses in uniform strength and beauty any verse that has been written since; the men who wrote were as lawless, as daring, as superbly conscious of their own powers as the great explorers and

adventurers who carried the British flag to the ends of the earth and made the English sailor feared as one whose high courage and bulldog tenacity never recognized defeat.

Given creative literary genius in greater measure than any other man was ever endowed with, the limits of Shakespeare's development could not be marked. His capacity was boundless and, living in an atmosphere as favorable to literary art as that of Athens in the time of Pericles, Shakespeare produced in a few years those immortal plays which have never been equaled in mastery of human emotion and beauty and power of diction.

There is no guide to the order in which Shakespeare wrote his plays, except the internal evidence of his verse. Certain habits of metrical work, as shown in the meter and the arrangement of the lines, have enabled close students of Shakespeare to place most of the comedies after the historical plays. Thus in the early plays Shakespeare arranged his blank verse so that the sense ends with each line and he was much given to rhymed couplets at the close of each long speech. But later, when he had gained greater mastery of his favor-

ite blank verse, many lines are carried over, thus welding them more closely and forming verse that has the rhythm and beauty of organ tones. As Shakespeare advanced in command over the difficult blank verse he showed less desire to use rhyme.

This close study of versification shows that *Love's Labor's Lost* was probably Shakespeare's first play, followed by *The Comedy of Errors* and by several historical plays. One year after his first rollicking comedy appeared he produced *Romeo and Juliet*, but this great drama of young love was revised carefully six years later and put into the form that we know. Three years after his start he produced *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*, and followed these with his greatest comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, the latter the comedy which appeals most strongly to modern readers and modern audiences.

Then came a period in which Shakespeare's world was somber, and his creative genius found expression in the great tragedies—*Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. And finally we have the closing years of production, in which he wrote three fine

plays — *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*.

According to the best authorities, Shakespeare began writing plays in 1590 and he ended early in 1613. Into these twenty-three years he crowded greater intellectual activity than any other man ever showed in the same space of time. Probably Sir Walter Scott, laboring like a galley slave at the oar to pay off the huge debt rolled up by the reckless Ballantyne, comes next in creative literary power to Shakespeare; but Scott's work was in prose and was far easier of production.

Shakespeare, like all writers of his day, took his materials from all sources and never scrupled to borrow plots from old or contemporary authors. But he so transmuted his materials by the alchemy of genius that one would never recognize the originals from his finished version. And he put into his great plays such a wealth of material drawn from real life that one goes to them for comfort and sympathy in affliction as he goes to the great books of the Bible. In a single play, as in *Hamlet*, the whole round of human life and passions is reviewed. Whatever may be his woe or his disappointment, no one goes to *Hamlet*

without getting some response to his grief or his despair.

To give a list of the plays of Shakespeare which one should read is very difficult, because one reader prefers this and another that, and each can give good reasons for his liking. What I shall try to do here is to indicate certain plays which, if carefully read several times, will make you master of Shakespeare's art and will prepare you for wider reading in this great storehouse of human nature. *Romeo and Juliet*, a tragedy of young, impulsive love, represents the fine flower of Shakespeare's young imagination, before it had been clouded by sorrow. The verse betrays some of the defects of his early style, but it is rich in beauty and passion. The plot is one of the best, and this, with the opportunity for striking stage effects and brilliant costumes, has made it the most popular of all Shakespeare's plays. The characters are all sharply drawn and the swift unfolding of the plot represents the height of dramatic skill. Next to this, one should read *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock is one of the great characters in Shakespeare's gallery, a pathetic, lonely figure, barred out from all close association with his fellows in trade by evil traits, that

finally drive him to ruin. Then take up a comedy like *As You Like It*, as restful to the senses as fine music, and filled with verse as tuneful and as varied as the singing of a great artist.

By this reading you will be prepared for the supreme tragedies — each a masterpiece without a superior in any literature. These are *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In no other six works in any language can one find such range of thought, such splendor of verse, such soundings of the great sea of human passions — love, jealousy, ambition, hate, remorse, fear and shame. Each typifies some overmastering passion, but *Hamlet* stands above all as a study of a splendid mind, swayed by every wind of impulse, noble in defeat and pathetic in the final ruin of hope and love, largely due to lack of courage and decision of character. Take it all in all, *Hamlet* represents the finest creative work of any modern author. This play is packed with bitter experience of life, cast in verse that is immortal in its beauty and melody.

Macbeth represents ambition, linked with superstition and weakness of will; the fruit is an evil brood — remorse struggles

1. Shakespeare's Birthplace at Stratford-on-Avon before the Restoration which has Spoiled it

2. The Anne Hathaway Cottage

with desire for power, affection is torn by the malign influence of guilt, as seen in the unhinging of Lady Macbeth's mind. No one should miss the opportunity to see a great actor or a great actress in *Macbeth*—it is a revelation of the deeps of human tragedy. *King Lear* is the tragedy of old age, the same tragedy that Balzac drew in *Le Pere Goriot*, save that Lear becomes bitter, and after weathering the storm of madness, wreaks vengeance on his unnatural daughters. Old Goriot, one of the most pathetic figures in all fiction, goes to his grave trying to convince the world that his heartless girls really love him.

The real hero of *Julius Cæsar* is Brutus, done to death by men of lesser mold and coarser natures, who take advantage of his lack of practical sense and knowledge of human nature. This play is seldom put on the stage in recent years, but it is always a treat to follow it when depicted by good actors. *Othello* is the tragedy of jealousy working upon the mind of a simple and noble nature, which is quick to accept the evil hints of Iago because of its very lack of knowledge of women. Iago is the greatest type of pure villainy in all literature, far more vicious than Goethe's Mephis-

topheles, because he wreaks his power over others largely from a satanic delight in showing his skill and resources in evil. As a play *Othello* is the most perfectly constructed of Shakespeare's works. Finally in *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare shows the disintegrating force of guilty love, which does not revolt even when the Egyptian Queen ruins her lover's cause by unspeakable cowardice. Cleopatra is the great siren of literature, and the picture of her charms is fine verse.

And here let me advise the hearing of good actors in Shakespeare as a means of culture. All the great Shakespearean actors are gone, but Mantell remains, and he, though not equal to Booth, is, to my mind, far more convincing than Irving. Mantell's Lear is the essence of great acting — something to recall with rare pleasure. Edwin Booth I probably saw in *Hamlet* a score of times in twice that many years, but never did I see him without getting some new light on the melancholy Dane. Even on successive nights Booth was never just the same, as his mood tinged his acting. His sonorous voice, his perfect enunciation, his graceful gestures, above all his striking face, alive with the light of genius —

these are memories it is a delight to recall.

To develop appreciation of Shakespeare I would advise reading the plays aloud. In no other way will you be able to savor the beauty and the melody of the blank verse. It was my good fortune while an undergraduate at Cornell University to be associated for four years with Professor Hiram Corson, then head of the department of English literature. Corson believed in arousing interest in Shakespeare by reading extracts from the best plays, with running comment on the passages that best illustrated the poet's command of all the resources of blank verse. His voice was like a fine organ, wonderfully developed to express every emotion, and I can recall after nearly forty years as though it were but yesterday the thrilling effect of these readings. No actor on the stage, with the single exception of Edwin Booth, equaled Corson in beauty of voice or in power of expression.

The result of these readings, with the comment that came from a mind stored with Shakespearean lore, was to stir one's ambition to study the great plays. Recalling the liberal education that came from

Corson's readings, I have been deeply sorry for college students whom I have seen vainly trying to appreciate Shakespeare's verse as read by professors with harsh, rasping, monotonous voices that killed the beauty of rhyme and meter as a frost kills a fine magnolia blossom breathing perfume over a garden. When will college presidents awake to the fact that book learning alone cannot make a successful professor of English literature, when the man is unable to bring out the melody of the verse? Similar folly is shown by the theological schools that continue to inflict upon the world preachers whose faulty elocution makes a mock of the finest passages of the Bible.

In my own case my tireless study of Shakespeare during four years at college, which included careful courses of reading and study during the long vacations, so saturated my mind with the great plays that they have been ever since one of my most cherished possessions. After years of hard newspaper work it is still possible for me to get keen pleasure from reading aloud to myself any of Shakespeare's plays. My early study of Shakespeare led me to look up every unfamiliar word, every

phrase that was not clear. This used to be heavy labor, but now all the school and college editions are equipped with these aids to the student. The edition of Shakespeare which always appealed to me most strongly was the Temple edition, edited by Israel Gollancz. It is pocket size, beautifully printed and very well edited. For a companion on a solitary walk in city or country no book is superior to one of Shakespeare's plays in this convenient Temple edition, bound in limp leather.

The best edition of Shakespeare in one volume is, to my mind, the Cambridge edition, issued by the Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston, uniform with the same edition of other English and American poets. This, of course, has only a few textual notes, but it has a good glossary of unusual and obsolete words. It makes a royal octavo volume of one thousand and thirty-six double-column pages, clearly printed in nonpareil type.

In this chapter I have been able only to touch on the salient features of the work of the foremost English poet and dramatist, and, in my judgment, the greatest writer the world has ever seen. If these words of mine stimulate any young reader to take

up the study of Shakespeare I shall feel well repaid. Certainly, with the single exception of the Bible, no book will reward a careful, loving study so well as Shakespeare.

How to Read the Ancient Classics

Authors of Greece and Rome One Should Know—Masterpieces of the Ancient World that may be Enjoyed in Good English Versions

In choosing the great books of the world, after the Bible and Shakespeare, one is brought face to face with a perplexing problem. It is easy to provide a list for the scholar, the literary man, the scientist, the philosopher; but it is extremely difficult to arrange any list for the general reader, who may not have had the advantage of a college education or any special literary training. And here, at the outset, enters the problem of the Greek, Latin and other ancient classics which have always been widely read and which you will find quoted by most writers, especially those of a half century ago. In this country literary fads

have prevailed for a decade or two, only to be dropped for new fashions in culture.

Take Emerson, for instance. His early development was strongly affected by German philosophy, which was labeled Transcendentalism. A. Bronson Alcott, who never wrote anything that has survived, was largely instrumental in infecting Emerson with his own passion for the dreamy German philosophical school. Emerson also was keenly alive to the beauties of the Greek and the Persian poets, although he was so broad-minded in regard to reading books in good translations that he once said he would as soon think of swimming across the Charles river instead of taking the bridge, as of reading any great masterpiece in the original when he could get a good translation.

Many of Emerson's essays are an ingenious mosaic of Greek, Latin, Persian, Hindoo and Arabic quotations. These extracts are always apt and they always point some shrewd observation or conclusion of the Sage of Concord; but that Emerson should quote them as a novelty reveals the provincial character of New England culture in his day as strongly as the lectures of Margaret Fuller.

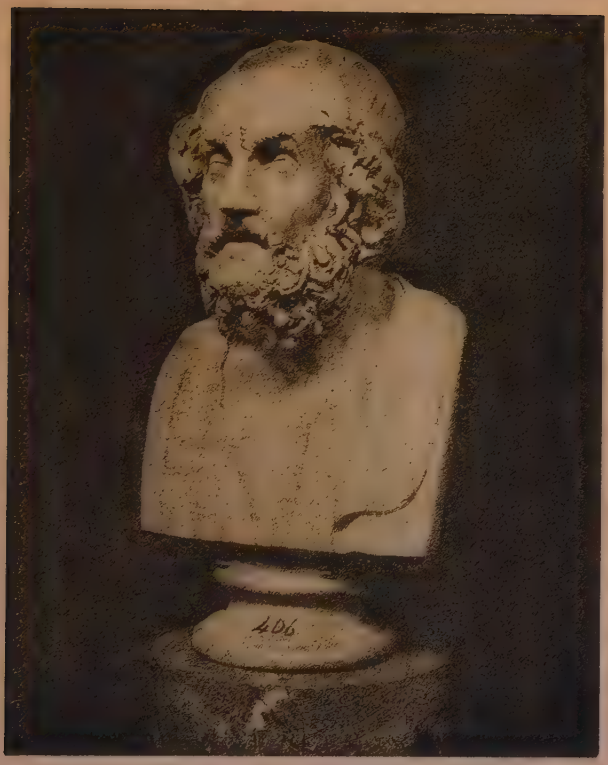
The Ancient Classics

The question that always arises in my mind when reading a new list of the hundred or the fifty best books by some recognized literary authority is: Does the ordinary business or professional man, who has had no special literary training, take any keen interest in the great masterpieces of the Greeks and Romans? Does it not require some special aptitude or some special preparation for one to appreciate Plato's *Dialogues* or Sophocles' *Œdipus*, Homer's *Iliad* or Horace's *Odes*, even in the best translations? In most cases, I think the reading of the Greek and Latin classics in translations is barren of any good results. Unless one has a passionate sympathy with Greek or Roman life, it is impossible, without a study of the languages and an intimate knowledge of the life and ideals of the people, to get any grasp of their best literary work. The things which the scholar admires seem to the great public flat and commonplace; the divine simplicity, the lack of everything modern, seems to narrow the intellectual horizon. This, I think, is the general result.

But over against this must be placed the exceptions among men of literary genius like Keats and Richard Jefferies, both Eng-

lishmen of scanty school education, who rank, to my mind, among the greatest interpreters of the real spirit of the classical age. Keats, like Shakespeare, knew "small Latin and less Greek"; yet in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and his *Endymion* he has succeeded in bringing over into the alien English tongue the very essence of Greek life and thought. Matthew Arnold, with all his scholarship and culture, never succeeded in doing this, even in such fine work as *A Strayed Reveler* or *Empedocles on Etna*. In the same way Jefferies, who is neglected by readers of today, in *The Story of My Heart* has reproduced ancient Rome and made Julius Cæsar more real than we find him in his own *Commentaries*.

If you can once reach the point of view of Keats or Jefferies you will find a new world opening before you — a world of fewer ideas, but of far more simple and genuine life; of narrower horizon, but of intenser power over the primal emotions. This was a world without Christ — a world which placidly accepted slavery as a recognized institution; which calmly ignored all claims of the sick, the afflicted and the poverty-stricken, and which admitted the right to take one's own life when that life



Bust of Homer in the Museum of Naples
Another Fine Bust is in the Louvre at Paris
but all are Idealized for the World
has no Authentic Records of the
Author of the
"Iliad" and the "Odyssey"

became burdensome through age or disease, or when self-destruction would save one from humiliation and punishment.

These ideas are all reflected in the great masterpieces of the Greeks and the Romans which have come down to us. Sometimes this reflection is tinged with a modern touch of sentiment, as in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius; but usually it is hard and repellant in its unconsciousness of romantic love or sympathy or regard for human rights, which Christianity has made the foundation stones of the modern world. This difference it is which prevents the average man or woman of today from getting very near to the classic writers. Even the greatest of these, with all their wealth of beauty and pathos, fail to impress one as do far less gifted writers of our own time.

At the head of the ancient classics stand Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Æneid*. It is very difficult to get the spirit of either of these authors from a metrical translation. Many famous poets have tried their hand on Homer, with very poor results. About the worst version is that of Alexander Pope, who translated the *Iliad* into the neat, heroic verse that suited so well his own *Essay on Man* and his *Dunciad*.

Many thousand copies were sold and the thrifty poet made a small fortune out of the venture. All the contemporary critics praised it, partly because they thought it was good, as they did not even appreciate the verse of Shakespeare, and partly because they feared the merciless pen of Pope. The Earl of Derby translated the *Iliad* into good blank verse, but this becomes very tiresome before you get through a single book. William Cullen Bryant, the American poet, gave far greater variety to his verse and his metrical translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is perhaps the best version in print. The best metrical translation of the *Æneid* is that of Christopher P. Cranch. The very best translation for the general reader is the prose version of Butcher and Lang. These two English scholars have rendered both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into good, strong, idiomatic prose, and in this form the reader who doesn't understand Greek can get some idea of the beauty of the sonorous lines of the original poem. Conington and Professor Church have each done the same service for Virgil and their prose versions of the scholarly Latin poet will be found equally readable.

Portrait of Virgil
Taken from a Bust by L. P. Boitard
and Engraved on Copper for the
Frontispiece of Warton's
Virgil, 1753

Homer and Virgil give an excellent idea of the ancient way of looking upon life. Everything is clear, brilliant, free from all illusions; there are no moral digressions; the characters live and move as naturally as the beasts of the field and with the same unconscious enjoyment of life and love and the warmth of the sun. The gods decree the fate of men; the prizes of this world fall to him who has the stoutest heart, the strongest arm and the most cunning tongue. Each god and goddess of Olympus has favorites on earth, and when these favorites are in trouble or danger the gods appeal to Jove to intercede for them. None of the characters reveals any except the most primitive emotions.

Helen of Troy sets the whole ancient world aflame, but it is only the modern poets who put any words of remorse or shame into her beautiful mouth. And yet these old stories are among the most attractive that have ever been told. They appeal to young and old alike, and when one sees the bright eyes of children flash over the deeds of the heroes of Homer, he may get some idea of what these tales were to the early Greeks. Told by professional story-tellers about the open fire

at night, they had much to do with the development of the Greek mind and character, as seen at its best in the age of Pericles. Virgil took Æneas of Troy as his hero and wrote his great national epic of the founding of Rome.

Only brief space can be given to the other worthies of the classical age. Every one should have some knowledge of Plato, whose great service was to tell the world of the life and teachings of Socrates, the wisest of the ancients. Get Jowett's translation of the *Phædo* and read the pathetic story of the last days of Socrates. Or get the *Republic* and learn of Plato's ideal of good government. Jowett was one of the greatest Greek scholars and his translations are simple and strong, a delight to read.

Of the great Greek dramatists read one work of each — say, the *Antigone* of Sophocles, the *Medea* of Euripides and the *Prometheus* of Æschylus. If you like these, it is easy to find the others. Then there is Plutarch, whose lives of famous Greeks and Romans used to be one of the favorite books of our grandfathers. It is little read today, but you can get much out of it that will remain as a permanent possession. The Romans were great letter-writers, perhaps

PLATO, AFTER AN ANTIQUE BUST
PLATO GAVE THE WORLD ITS CHIEF KNOWLEDGE
OF SOCRATES AND HE ALSO ANTICIPATED
MANY MODERN DISCOVERIES IN
SCIENCE AND THOUGHT

because they had not developed the modern fads of society and sport which consume most of the leisure of today, and in these letters you will get nearer to the writer than in his other works.

Cicero in his most splendid orations never touched me as he does in his familiar letters, while Pliny gives a mass of detail that throws a clear light on Roman life. Pliny would have made an excellent reporter, as he felt the need of detail in giving a picture of any event. There are a score of other famous ancient writers whose work you may get in good English translations, but of all these perhaps you will enjoy most the two philosophers—Epictetus, the Greek stoic, and Marcus Aurelius, who retained a refreshing simplicity of mind when he was absolute master of the Roman world. Most of the Greek and Latin authors may be secured in Bohn's series of translations, which are usually good.

This ancient world of Greece and Rome is full of stimulus to the general reader, although he may have no knowledge either of Latin or Greek. More and more the colleges are abandoning the training in the classics and are substituting German or

French or Italian for the old requirements of Greek and Latin. As intellectual training, the modern languages cannot compare with the classical, but in our day the intense competition in business, the struggle for mere existence has become so keen that it looks as though the leisurely methods of education of our forefathers must be abandoned.

The rage for specializing has reached such a point that one often finds an expert mining or electrical engineer graduated from one of our great universities who knows no more of ancient or modern literature than an ignorant ditch-digger, and who cannot write a short letter in correct English. These things were not "required" in his course; hence he did not take them. And it is far more difficult to induce such a man to cultivate the reading habit than it is to persuade the man who has never been to college to devote some time every day to getting culture from the great books of the world.

The Arabian Nights and Other Classics

Oriental Fairy Tales and German Legends—The Ancient Arabian Stories and the Nibelungenlied Among World's Greatest Books.

The gap between the ancient writers and the modern is bridged by several great books, which have been translated into all languages. Among these the following are entitled to a place: *The Arabian Nights; Don Quixote*, by Cervantes; *The Divine Comedy*, by Dante; *The Imitation of Christ; The Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyám, St. Augustine's Confessions*, and *The Nibelungenlied.*

Other great books could be added to this list, such as *Benvenuto Cellini's Autobiography, Boccaccio's Tales*, the *Analects of Confucius* and *Mahomet's Koran.* But these are not among the books which one must read.

Those that I have named first should be read by any one who wishes to get the best in all literature. And another reason is that characters and sayings from these books are so often quoted that to be ignorant of them is to miss much which is significant in the literature of the last hundred years. Whatever forms a part of everyday speech cannot be ignored, and the *Arabian Nights*, *Don Quixote* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* are three books that have made so strong an impression on the world that they have stimulated the imagination of hundreds of writers and have formed the text for many volumes. Dante's great work alone has been commented upon by hundreds of writers, and these commentaries and the various editions make up a library of over five thousand volumes. *The Arabian Nights* has been translated from the original into all languages, although the primitive tales still serve to amuse Arabs when told by the professional story-tellers of today.

In choosing the great books of the world first place must be given to those which have passed into the common language of the people or which have been quoted so frequently that one cannot remain ignorant

EDMUND DULAC'S CONCEPTION
OF QUEEN SCHEHEREZADE, WHO TOLD THE
"ARABIAN NIGHTS" TALES

of them. After the Bible and Shakespeare the third place must be given to *The Arabian Nights*, a collection of tales of Arabia and Egypt, supposed to have been related by Queen Scheherezade to her royal husband when he was wakeful in the night. The first story was told in order that he might not carry out his determination to have her executed on the following morning; so she halted her tale at a very interesting point and, artfully playing upon the King's interest, every night she stopped her story at a point which piqued curiosity. In this way, so the legend goes, she entertained her spouse for one thousand and one nights, until he decided that so good a story-teller deserved to keep her head.

Today these Arabian tales and many variants of *The Thousand and One Nights* are told by professional story-tellers who call to their aid all the resources of gesture, facial expression and variety of tone. In fact, these Oriental story-tellers are consummate actors, who play upon the emotions of their excitable audiences until they are able to move them to laughter and tears. This childlike character the Arab has retained until today, despite the fact that he is rapidly becoming expert in the

latest finance and that he is a past master in the handling of the thousands of tourists who visit Egypt, Arabia and other Mohammedan countries every year.

The sources of the leading tales of *The Arabian Nights* cannot be traced. Such stories as *Sinbad the Sailor*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *Aladdin or the Wonderful Lamp* may be found in the literature of all Oriental countries, but the form in which these Arabian tales have come down to us shows that they were collected and arranged during the reign of the good Caliph Haroun al Raschid of Bagdad, who flourished in the closing years of the eighth century. The book was first made known to European readers by Antoine Galland in 1704. This French writer made a free paraphrase of some of the tales, but, singularly enough, omitted the famous stories of *Aladdin* and *Ali Baba*.

The first good English translation was made by E. W. Lane from an Arabic version, condensed from the original text. The only complete translations of the Arabic version were made by Sir Richard Burton for a costly subscription edition and by John Payne for the Villon Society. Burton's notes are very interesting, as he

The Jinnee and the Merchant
A Vignette Woodcut by William Harvey in
the First Edition of Lane's Translation
which Still Remains the Best
English Version of the
"Arabian Nights"

probably knew the Arab better than any other foreigner, but his literal translation is tedious, because of the many repetitions, due to the custom of telling the stories by word of mouth.

The usual editions of *The Arabian Nights*, contain eight stories. Happy are the children who have had these immortal stories told or read to them in their impressionable early years. Like the great stories of the Bible are these fairy tales of magicians, genii, enchanted carpets and flying horses; of princesses that wed poor boys who have been given the power to summon the wealth of the underworld; of the adventures of Sinbad in many waters, and of his exploits, which were more remarkable than those of Ulysses.

The real democracy of the Orient is brought out in these tales, for the Grand Vizier may have been the poor boy of yesterday and the young adventurer with brains and cunning and courage often wins the princess born to the purple. All the features of Moslem life, which have not changed for fourteen hundred years, are here reproduced and form a very attractive study. For age or childhood *The Arabian Nights* will always have a perennial charm,

because these tales appeal to the imagination that remains forever young.

The great poem of German literature, *The Nibelungenlied*, may be bracketed with *The Arabian Nights*, for it expresses perfectly the ideals of the ancient Germans, the historic myths that are common to all Teutonic and Scandinavian races, and the manners and customs that marked the forefathers of the present nation of "blood and iron." *The Nibelungenlied* has well been called the German *Iliad*, and it is worthy of this appellation, for it is the story of a great crime and a still greater retribution.

It is really the story of Siegfried, King of the Nibelungs, in lower Germany, favored of the Gods, who fell in love with Kriemhild, Princess of the Burgundians; of Siegfried's help by which King Gunther, brother of Kriemhild, secures as his wife the Princess Brunhilde of Iceland; of the rage and humiliation of Brunhilde when she discovers that she has been subdued by Siegfried instead of by her own overlord; of Brunhilde's revenge, which took the form of the treacherous slaying of Siegfried by Prince Hagen, and of the tremendous revenge of Kriemhild years after, when, as the wife of King Etzel of the Huns, she

sees the flower of the Burgundian chivalry put to the sword, and she slays with her own hand both her brother Gunther and Hagen, the murderer of Siegfried.

The whole story is dominated by the tragic hand of fate. Siegfried, the warrior whom none can withstand in the lists, is undone by a woman's tongue. The result of the shame he has put upon Brunhilde Siegfried reveals to his wife, and a quarrel between the two women ends in Kriemhild taunting Brunhilde with the fact that King Gunther gained her love by fraud and that Siegfried was the real knight who overcame and subdued her. Then swiftly follows the plot to kill Siegfried, but Brunhilde, whose wrath could be appeased only by the peerless knight's death, has a change of heart and stabs herself on his funeral pyre. Intertwined with this story of love, revenge and the slaughter of a whole race is the myth of a great treasure buried by the dwarfs in the Rhine, the secret of which goes to the grave with grim old Hagen.

These tales that are told in *The Nibelungenlied* have been made real to readers of today by Wagner, who uses them as the libretto of some of his finest operas. With variations, he has told in the greatest dra-

matic operas the world has yet seen the stories of Siegfried and Brunhilde, the labors of the Valkyrie, and the wrath of the gods of the old Norse mythology. To understand aright these operas, which have come to be performed by all the great companies, one should be familiar with the epic that first recorded these tales of chivalry.

Many variants there are of this epic in the literature of Norway, Sweden and Iceland, but *The Nibelungenlied* remains as the model of these tales of the heroism of men and the quarrels of the gods. Wagner has used these materials with surpassing skill, and no one can hear such operas as *Siegfried*, *The Valkyrie*, and *Gotterdammerung* without receiving a profound impression of the reality and the power of these old myths and legends.

Perhaps for most readers Carlyle's essay on *The Nibelungenlied* will suffice, for in this the great English essayist and historian has told the story of the German epic and has translated many of the most striking passages. In verse the finest rendering of this story is found in *Sigura the Volsung* by William Morris, told in sonorous measure that never becomes monotonous. A good prose translation has been made by Pro-

fessor Shumway of the University of Pennsylvania. The volume was brought out by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston in 1909. His version is occasionally marred by archaic turns of expression, but it comes far nearer to reproducing the spirit of the original than any of the metrical translations.

The Confessions of St. Augustine

An Eloquent Book of Religious Meditation — The Ablest of Early Christian Fathers Tells of His Youth, His Friends and His Conversion.

In reading the great books of the world one must be guided largely by his own taste. If a book is recommended to you and you cannot enjoy it after conscientious effort, then it is plain that the book does not appeal to you or that you are not ready for it. The classic that you may not be able to read this year may become the greatest book in the world to you in another year, when you have passed through some hard experience that has matured your mind or awakened some dormant faculties that call out for employment.

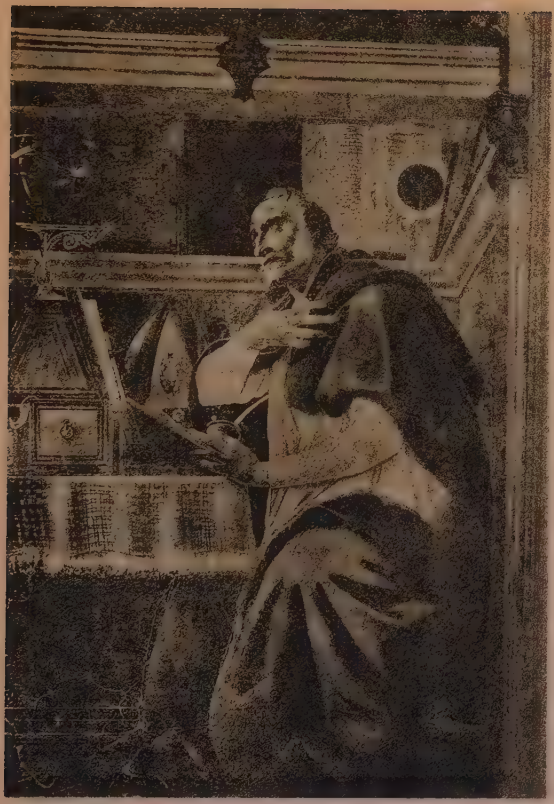
Great success or great failure, a crushing grief or a disappointment that seems to

take all the light out of your world—these are some of the things that mature and change the mind. So, if you cannot feel interest in some of the books that are recommended in these articles put the volumes aside and wait for a better day. It will be sure to come, unless you drop into the habit of limiting your reading to the newspapers and the magazines. If you fall into this common practice then there is little hope for you, as real literature will lose all its attractions. Better to read nothing than to devote your time entirely to what is ephemeral and simply for the day it is printed.

The Confessions of St. Augustine is a book which will appeal to one reader, while another can make little of it. For fifteen hundred years it has been a favorite book among priests and theologians and those who are given to pious meditation. Up to the middle of the last century it probably had a more vital influence in weaning people from the world and in turning their thoughts to religious things than any other single book except the Bible. And this influence is not hard to seek, for into this book the stalwart old African Bishop of the fourth century put his whole heart, with its pas-

sionate love of God and its equally passionate desire for greater perfection. As an old commentator said, "it is most filled with the fire of the love of God and most calculated to kindle it in the heart."

This is the vital point and the one which it seems to me explains why the *Confessions* is very hard reading for most people of today. The praise of God, the constant quotation of passages from the Bible and the fear that his feelings may relapse into his former neglect of religion — these were common in the writers who followed Augustine for more than a thousand years. In fact, they remained the staple of all religious works up to the close of the Georgian age in England. Then came a radical change, induced perhaps by the rapid spread of scientific thought. The old religious books were neglected and the new works showed a directness of statement, an absence of Biblical verbiage and a closer bearing on everyday life and thought. This trend has been increased in devotional books, as well as in sermons, until it would be impossible to induce a church congregation of today to accept a sermon of the type that was preached up to the middle of the last century.



PORTRAIT OF ST. AUGUSTINE
BY THE FAMOUS FLORENTINE PAINTER
SANDRO BOTTICELLI—THE ORIGINAL IS IN
THE OGNISSANTI, FLORENCE

For this reason it seems to me that any one who wishes to cultivate St. Augustine should begin by reading a chapter of the *Confessions*. If you enjoy this, then it will be well to take up the complete *Confessions*, one of the best editions of which will be found in Everyman's Library, translated by Dr. E. B. Pusey, the leader of the great Tractarian movement in England. Pusey frowns on the use of any book of extracts from St. Augustine, but this English churchman, with his severe views, cannot be taken as a guide in these days. Doubtless he thought *Pamela* and *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* entertaining books of fiction; but the reader of today pronounces them too dull and too sentimental to read.

Many there are in these days who preserve something of the old Covenanter spirit in regard to the Bible and other devotional books. One of these is Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell, superintendent of the Labrador Medical Mission, an Oxford man, who cast aside a brilliant career in England to throw in his life with the poor fishermen along the stormy coast which he has made his home. Dr. Grenfell has come to have the same influence over these uneducated men that General Gordon of

Khartoum gained over alien races like the Chinese and the Soudanese, or that Stanley secured over savage African tribes. It is the intense earnestness, the simple-minded sincerity of the man who lives as Christ would live on earth which impresses these people of Labrador and gains their love and confidence. Grenfell in a little essay, *What the Bible Means to Me*, develops his feeling for the Scriptures, which is much the same feeling that inspired Augustine, as well as John Bunyan. Grenfell even goes to the length of saying that he prefers the Bible as a suggester of thought to any other book, and he regrets that it is not bound as secular books are bound, so that he might read it without attracting undue attention on railroad trains or in public places while waiting to be served with meals.

Gordon carried with him to the place where he met his death pieces of what he firmly believed was wood of the real cross of Calvary, and on the last day of his life, when he looked out over the Nile for the help that never came, he read his Bible with simple confidence in the God of Battles. Stanley believed that the Lord was with him in all his desperate adventures in

savage Africa, and this belief warded off fever and discouragement and gave him the tremendous energy to overcome obstacles that would have proved fatal to any one not keyed up to his high tension by implicit faith in the Lord.

If you wish to know what personal faith in God means and what it can accomplish in this world of devotion to mammon, read Stanley's *Autobiography*, edited by his wife, that Dorothy Tennant who is one of the most brilliant of living English women. It is one of the most stimulating books in the world, and no young man can read it without having his ambition powerfully excited and his better nature stirred by the spectacle of the rise of this poor abused boy slave in a Welsh foundlings' home to a place of high honor and great usefulness — a seat beside kings, and a name that will live forever as the greatest of African explorers.

It is this marvelous faith in God, which is as real as the breath in his nostrils, that makes St. Augustine's *Confessions* a vital and enduring book. It is this faith that charges it with the potency of living words, although the man who wrote this book has been dead over fifteen hundred years.

Augustine was born in Numidia and brought up amid pagan surroundings, although his mother, Monica, was an ardent Christian and prayed that he might become a convert to her faith. He was trained as a rhetorician and spent some time at Carthage. When his thoughts were directed to religion the main impediment in the way of his acceptance of Christianity was the fact that he lived with a concubine and had had a child by her. Finally came the death of his bosom friend, which called out one of the great laments of all time, and then his gradual conversion to the Christian church, largely due to careful study of St. Paul.

Following hard upon his conversion came the death of his mother, who had been his constant companion for many years. Rarely eloquent is his tribute to this unselfish mother, whose virtues were those of the good women of all ages and whose love for her son was the flower of her life. In all literature there is nothing finer than the old churchman's tender memorial to his dear mother and his pathetic record of the heavy grief, that finally was eased by a flood of tears. Here are some of the simple words of this lament over the dead:

Que la cause de lempire de rõme et de toute autre royaume nest point en estat par fortune / ou par la cõstellacion ou position des estoilles.

Pour ce que felicite ou beneurtete est plainete de toutes les choses qui sõt a desirer laquelle nest pas deesse. mais est dõ de dieu Et pour ce ne doyt aucũ dieu estre adoure des hõmes fors celluy seulemẽt qui les peut faire beneures / dont secelle felicite estoit deesse len auroit cause dadourer elle seule. Pour ce est il raison que nous deons cõsequãment pour quelle cause dieu qui peut donner ces biens que peuent auoir semblablement ceulx qui ne sõt pas bons Et par ce aussi ceulx q̃ ne sont pas beneures ait voulu lempire de romme estre si grant et durer si longuement pour ce que certes celle multitude de faulx dieux que ilz adouroient ne la pas fait. (Et nous auons la cy dit moult de choses et encores en dirons la ou il nous sẽblera

A Page from
St. Augustine's "La Cite de Dieu"
which was Printed in Abbeville
France, in 1486

"I closed her eyes; and there flowed withal a mighty sorrow into my heart, which was overflowing into tears; mine eyes at the same time, by the violent command of my mind, drank up their fountain wholly dry; and woe was me in such strife! * * * What then was it which did grievously pain me within, but a fresh wound wrought through the sudden wrench of that most sweet and dear custom of living together? I joyed indeed in her testimony, when, in her last sickness, mingling her endearments with my acts of duty, she called me 'dutiful,' and mentioned with great affection of love that she never heard any harsh or reproachful sound uttered by my mouth against her. But yet, O my Lord, who madest us, what comparison is there betwixt that honor that I paid her and her slavery for me?"

Augustine was the ablest of the early Christian fathers and he did yeoman's service in laying broad and deep the foundations of the Christian church and in defending it against the heretics. But of all his many works the *Confessions* will remain the most popular, because it voices the cry of a human heart and shows the human side of a great churchman.

Don Quixote One of the World's Great Books

Cervantes' Masterpiece a Book for All Time—Intensely Spanish, it Still Appeals to All Nations by its Deep Human Interest.

Among the great books of the world no contrast could be greater than that between St. Augustine's *Confessions* and *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, yet each in its way has influenced unnumbered thousands and will continue to influence other thousands so long as this world shall endure. Few great books have been so widely quoted as this masterpiece of the great Spaniard; few have contributed so many apt stories and pungent epigrams. Of the great imaginary characters of fiction none is more strongly or clearly defined than the sad-faced Knight of La Mancha and his squire, Sancho Panza. The grammar

school pupil in his reading finds constant allusions to Don Quixote and his adventures, and the world's greatest writers have drawn upon this romance by Cervantes for material to point their own remarks.

In this respect the only great author Spain has produced resembles Shakespeare. His appeal is universal because the man behind the romance had tasted to the bitter dregs all that life can offer, yet his nature had remained sweet and wholesome. Byron in *Childe Harold*, with his cunning trick of epigram, said that Cervantes "smiled Spain's chivalry away," but chivalry was as dead in the days of Cervantes as it is now. What the creator of *Don Quixote* did was to ridicule the high-flown talk, the absurd sentimentality that marked chivalry, while at the same time he brought out, as no one else has ever done, the splendid qualities that made chivalry immortal.

Don Quixote is a man who is absolutely out of touch with the world in which he moves, but while you laugh at his absurd misconceptions you feel for him the deepest respect; you would no more laugh at the man himself than you would at poor unfortunate Lear. The idealistic quality of Don Quixote himself is enhanced by the

swinish nature of Sancho Panza, who cannot understand any of his master's raptures. Into this character of the sorrowful-faced knight Cervantes put all the results of his own hard experience. The old knight is often pessimistic, but it is a genial pessimism that makes one smile; while running through the whole book is a modern note that can be found in no other book written in the early days of the seventeenth century.

That Cervantes himself was unconscious that he had produced a book that would live for centuries after he was gone is the best proof of the genius of the writer. The plays and romances which he liked the best are now forgotten, as are most of the works of Lope de Vega, the popular literary idol of his day. The book is intensely Spanish, yet its appeal is limited to no race, no creed and no age.

We have far more data in regard to the life of Cervantes than we have concerning Shakespeare, yet the Spanish author died on the same day. Cervantes came of noble family, but its fortune had vanished when he entered on life. He spent his boyhood in Valladolid and at twenty went up to Madrid, where he soon joined the train of

PORTRAIT OF CERVANTES
FROM AN OLD STEEL ENGRAVING IN A
RARE FRENCH EDITION OF
"DON QUIXOTE"

the Papal Ambassador, Monsignor Acquaviva, and with him went to Rome, then the literary center of the world. There he learned Italian and absorbed culture as well as the prevailing enthusiasm for the crusades against the Turks, who were then menacing Venice and all the cities along the northern shore of the Mediterranean.

The leader of the Christian host was Don John of Austria, one of the great leaders of the world, who had the power of arousing the passionate devotion of his followers. Cervantes joined the Christian troops and at the battle of Lepanto, one of the great sea fights of all history, he was captain of a company of soldiers on deck and came out of the battle with two gun-shot wounds in his body and with his left hand so mutilated that it had to be cut off. Despite the fact that he was crippled, his enthusiasm still burned brightly and he saw service for the next five years.

Then, on his way home by sea, he was captured and taken to Algiers as a slave. There he fell to the share of an Albanian renegade and afterward he was sold to the Dey of Algiers. During all the five years of his Moorish captivity Cervantes was the life and soul of his fellow slaves, and he

was constantly planning to free himself and his companions. The personal force of the man may be seen from the fact that the Dey declared he "should consider captives, and barks and the whole city of Algiers in perfect safety could he but be sure of that handless Spaniard." Finally Cervantes was ransomed and returned to his home at the age of thirty-five. There he married and became a naval commissary and later a tax collector. His mind soon turned to literature, and for twenty years he wrote a great variety of verses and dramas, all in the prevailing sentimental spirit of the age. At last he produced the first part of *Don Quixote* at the age of fifty-eight, and he lacked only two years of seventy when the second and final part of the great romance was given to the world.

Comment has often been made on the ripe age of Cervantes when he produced his masterpiece, but Lockhart, who wrote an excellent short introduction to *Don Quixote*, points out that of all the great English novelists Smollett was the only one who did first-rate work while young. *Humphrey Clinker* and *Roderick Random* are little read in these days, but we have a noteworthy instance of the great success of a

new English novelist when past sixty years of age in William de Morgan, whose *Joseph Vance* made him famous, and who has followed this with no less than three great novels: *Alice for Short*, *Somehow Good* and *It Never Can Happen Again*. And the marvel of it is that Mr. de Morgan actually took up authorship at sixty, without any previous experience in writing. Dickens and Kipling are about the only exceptions to the rule that a novelist does his best work in mature years, but they are in a class by themselves.

Don Quixote reflects all the varying fortunes of Cervantes. The book was begun in prison, where Cervantes was cast, probably for attempting to collect debts. All his remarkable experiences in the wars against the Turks and in captivity among the Moors are embodied in the interpolated tales. The philosophy put into the mouth of the Knight of La Mancha is the fruit of Cervantes' hard experience and mature thought. He was a Spaniard with the sentiments and the prejudices of his century; but by the gift of genius he looked beyond his age and his country and, like Shakespeare, he wrote for all time and all peoples.

Nationality in literature never had a more striking example than is furnished by *Don Quixote*. It is Spanish through and through; an open-air romance, much of the action of which takes place on the road or in the wayside inns where the Knight and his squire tarry for the night. It swarms with characters that were common in the Spain of the close of the sixteenth and the early days of the seventeenth centuries. Cervantes never attempts to paint the life of the court or the church; he never introduces any great dignitaries, but he is thoroughly at home with the common people, and he tells his story apparently without any effort, yet with a keen appreciation of the natural humor that seasons every scene. And yet through it all Don Quixote moves a perfect figure of gentle knighthood, a man without fear and without reproach. You laugh at him but at the same time he holds your respect. Genius can no further go than to produce a miracle like this: the creation of a character that compels your respect in the face of childish follies and hallucinations.

No one can read *Don Quixote* carefully without getting rich returns from it in entertainment and culture. The humor is

Don Quixote Discoursing
to Sancho Panza in the Yard of the Inn which
the Knight Imagined was a Lordly Castle
From Gustave Doré's Illustrations
in the Clark Edition

often coarse, but it is hearty and wholesome, and underlying all the fun is the sober conviction that the hero of all these adventures is a man whom it would have been good to know. It is difficult for any one of Anglo-Saxon strain to understand those of Latin blood, but it seems to me that the American of New England ancestry is nearer to the Spaniard than to the Frenchman or the Italian.

Underneath the surface there is a lust for adventure and an element of enduring stubbornness in the Spaniard which made him in the heyday of his nation the greatest of explorers and conquerors. And as a basis of character is his love of truth and his sterling honesty, traits that have survived through centuries of decay and degeneracy, and that may yet restore Spain to something of her old prestige among the nations of Europe. So, in reading *Don Quixote* one may see in it an epitome of that old Spain which has so glorious a history in adventures that stir the blood, as in the conquests of Cortez and Pizarro, and in that higher realm of splendid sacrifice for an ideal, which witnessed the sale of Isabella's jewels to aid Columbus in his plans to discover a new world.

The Imitation of Christ

Features of Great Work by Old Thomas à Kempis—Meditations of a Flemish Monk Which Have Not Lost Their Influence in Five Hundred Years.

The great books of this world are not to be estimated by size or by the literary finish of their style. Behind every great book is a man greater than his written words, who speaks to us in tones that can be heard only by those whose souls are in tune with his. In other words, a great book is like a fine opera—it appeals only to those whose ears are trained to enjoy the harmonies of its music and the beauty of its words. Such a book is lost on one who reads only the things of the day and whose mind has never been cultivated to appreciate the beauty of spiritual aspiration,

Thomas à Kempis, the Frontispiece of an edition of "The Imitation of Christ" published by Suttaby and Company of London Amen Corner, 1883

just as the finest strains of the greatest opera, sung by a Caruso or a Calve, fail to appeal to the one who prefers ragtime to real music.

In this world, in very truth, you reap what you sow. If you have made a study of fine music, beautiful paintings and statuary and the best books, you cannot fail to get liberal returns in the way of spiritual enjoyment from the great works in all these arts. And this enjoyment is a permanent possession, because you can always call up in memory and renew the pleasure of a great singer's splendid songs, the strains of a fine orchestra, the impassioned words of a famous actor, the glory of color of an immortal painting, or the words of a poem that has lived through the centuries and has stimulated thousands of readers to the higher life.

One of the smallest of the world's famous books is *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. It may be slipped into one's coat pocket, yet this little book is second only to the Bible and Shakespeare in the record of the souls it has influenced. It may be read in two hours, yet every paragraph in it has the potency of spiritual life. Within the cloister, where it was written,

it has always been a favorite book of meditation, surpassing in its appeal the *Confessions of St. Augustine.*

In the great world without, it has held its own for five hundred years, gaining readers from all classes by sheer force of the sincerity and power of the man, who put into it all the yearnings of his soul, all the temptations, the struggles and the victories of his spirit. It was written in crabbed Latin of the fifteenth century, without polish and without logical arrangement, much as Emerson jotted down the thoughts which he afterward gathered up and strung together into one of his essays. Yet the vigor, truth, earnestness and spiritual passion of the poor monk in his cell fused his language into flame that warms the reader's heart after all these years.

Thomas à Kempis was plain Thomas Haemerken of Kempen, a small town near Cologne, the son of a poor mechanic, who had the great advantage of a mother of large heart and far more than the usual stock of book learning. Doubtless it was through his mother that Thomas inherited his taste for books and his desire to enter the church. He followed an elder brother into the cloister, spending his novitiate of

seven years at the training school of the Brothers of the Common Life at Deventer, in the Netherlands. Then he entered as postulant the monastery of Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle, of which his brother John was prior. This monastery was ruled by the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, and it was filled by the Brothers of the Common Life. For another seven years he studied to fit himself for this life of the cloister, and finally he was ordained a priest in 1413. As he entered upon his religious studies at the tender age of 13, he had been employed for fourteen years in preparing himself for his life work in the monastery.

The few personal details that have been handed down about him show that he was of unusual strength, with the full face of the people of his race, and that he kept until extreme old age the strength of his voice and the fire of his eye. For sixty years he remained a monk, spending most of his time in transcribing the Bible and devotional treatises and in teaching the neophytes of his own community. His devotion to books was the great passion of his life and doubtless reconciled a man of so much native strength of body and mind

to the monotony of the cloister. His favorite motto was: "Everywhere have I sought for peace, but nowhere have I found it save in a quiet corner with a little book." The ideal of the community was to live as nearly as possible the life of the early Christians. The community had the honor of educating Erasmus, the most famous scholar of the Renaissance.

Thomas à Kempis drew most of the inspiration for *The Imitation of Christ* from the Bible, and especially from the New Testament. The book is a series of eloquent variations on the great central theme of making one's life like that of Christ on earth. And with this monk, who lived in a community where all property was shared in common and where even individual earnings must be put into the general fund, this idea of reproducing the life of Christ was feasible. Cut off from all close human ties, freed from all thought of providing for food and shelter, the monastic life in a community like that of the Brothers of the Common Life was the nearest approach to the ideal spiritual existence that this world has ever seen. To live such a life for more than the ordinary span of years was good training for the production of the *Imitation*,

the most spiritual book of all the ages.

Every page of this great book reveals that the author had made the Bible a part of his mental possessions. So close and loving had been this study that the words of the Book of Books came unwittingly to his lips. All his spiritual experiences were colored by his Biblical studies; he rests his faith on the Bible as on a great rock which no force of nature can move. So in the *Imitation* we have the world of life and thought as it looked to a devout student of the Bible, whose life was cut off from most of the temptations and trials of men, yet whose conscience was so tender that he magnified his doubts and his failings.

Over and over he urges upon his readers to beware of pride, to cultivate humility, to keep the heart pure and the temper meek, so that happiness may come in this world and the assurance of peace in the world to come. Again and again he appeals to us not to set our hearts upon the treasures of this world, as they may fail us at any time, while the love of worldly things makes the heart callous and shuts the door on the finest aspirations of the soul.

In every word of this book one feels the

sincerity of the man who wrote it. The monk who jotted down his thoughts really lived the life of Christ on earth. He gained fame for his learning, his success as a teacher and his power as a writer of religious works; but at heart he remained as simple, sincere and humble as a little child. All his thoughts were devoted to gaining that perfection of character which marked the Master whom he loved to imitate; and in this book he pours out the longings that filled his soul and the joys that follow the realization of a good and useful life. In all literature there is no book which so eloquently paints the success of forgetting one's self in the work of helping others.

The *Imitation*, like the Bible, should be read day by day, if one is to draw aid and inspiration from it. Read two or three pages each day, and you will find it a rare mental tonic, so foreign to all present-day literature, that its virtues will stand out by comparison. Read it with the desire to feel as this old monk felt in his cell, and something of his rare spirit will come to you, healing your grief, opening your eyes to the many chances of doing good that lie all about you, cleansing your heart of envy, greed, covetousness and other worldly

desires. Here are a few passages of the *Imitation*, selected at random, which will serve to show the thought and style of the book:

"Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life giveth ease to the mind, and a pure conscience inspireth great confidence in God.

"That which profiteth little or nothing we heed, and that which is especially necessary we lightly pass over, because the whole man doth slide into outward things, and unless he speedily recovereth himself he willingly continueth immersed therein.

"Here a man is defiled by many sins, ensnared by many passions, held fast by many fears, racked by many cares, distracted by many curiosities, entangled by many vanities, compassed about with many errors, worn out with many labors, vexed with temptations, enervated by pleasures, tormented with want. When shall I enjoy true liberty without any hindrances, without any trouble of mind or body?"

Many famous writers have borne testimony to the great influence of *The Imitation of Christ* upon their spiritual development. Matthew Arnold often refers to the work of Thomas à Kempis, as do Ruskin

and others. Comte made it a part of his Positivist ritual, and General Gordon, that strange soldier of fortune, who carried with him what he believed to be the wood of the true cross, and who represented the ideal mystic in this strenuous modern life, had *The Imitation of Christ* in his pocket on the day that he fell under the spears of the Mahdi's savage fanatics at Khartoum. Perhaps the most eloquent tribute to the power of the *Imitation* is found in George Eliot's novel, *The Mill on the Floss*. The great novelist makes Maggie Tulliver find in the family garret an old copy of the *Imitation*. Then she says:

"A strange thrill of awe passed through Maggie while she read, as if she had been wakened in the night by a strain of solemn music, telling of beings whose souls had been astir, while hers was in a stupor. She knew nothing of doctrines and systems, of mysticism or quietism; but this voice of the far-off ages was the direct communication of a human soul's belief and experience, and came to Maggie as an unquestioned message. And so it remains to all time, a lasting record of human needs and human consolations; the voice of a brother who ages ago felt and suffered and re-

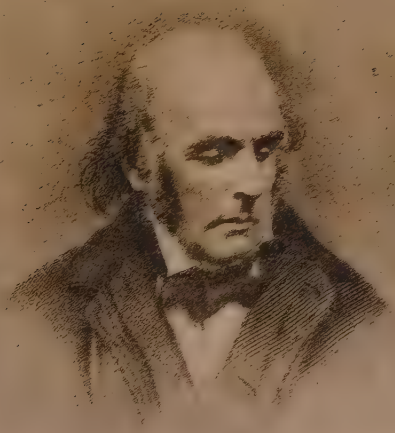
nounced, in the cloister; perhaps, with serge gown and tonsured head, with a fashion of speech different from ours, but under the same silent, far-off heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same stirrings, the same failures, the same weariness."

Many editions of *The Imitation of Christ* have been issued, but for one who wishes to make it a pocket companion none is better than the little edition in The Macmillan Company's *Pocket Classics*, edited by Brother Leo, professor of English literature in St. Mary's College, Oakland. This accomplished critic has written an excellent introduction to the book, in which he sketches the life of the old monk, the sources of his work and the curious controversy over its authorship which raged for many years. Buy this inexpensive edition and study it, and then, if you come to love old Thomas, get an edition that is worthy of his sterling merit.

The Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyám

Popularity of an Old Persian's Quatrains — Splendid Oriental Imagery Joined to Modern Doubt Found in This Great Poem.

A few of the world's greatest books have been given their popularity by the genius of their translators. Of these the most conspicuous example is *The Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyám*, which has enjoyed an extraordinary vogue among all English-speaking people for more than a half century since it was first given to the world by Edward FitzGerald, an Englishman of letters, whose reputation rests upon this free translation of the work of a minor Persian poet of the twelfth century. What has given it this extraordinary popularity is the strictly modern cast of thought of the old poet and the beauty of the version of the



The Best-Known Portrait of
Edward FitzGerald, Immortalized by his Version
of the "Rubá'iyát" — This Picture is from
a Steel Engraving of a Photograph of
"Old Fitz," the College Chum
and Lifelong Friend of
Thackeray and
Tennyson

English translator. Each quatrain or four-line verse of the poem is supposed to be complete in itself, but all are closely linked in thought, and the whole poem might well have been written by any skeptic of the present day who rejects the teachings of the various creeds and narrows life down to exactly what we know on this earth.

The imagery of the poem is Oriental and many of the figures of speech and the illustrations are purely Biblical; but in its essence the poem is the expression of a materialist, who cannot accept the doctrine of a future life because no one has ever returned to tell of the "undiscovered country" that lies beyond the grave. Epicureanism is the keynote of the poem, which rings the changes on the enjoyment of the only life that we know; but the poem is saved from rank materialism by its lofty speculative note and by its sense of individual power, that reminds one of Henley's famous sonnet.

Omar Khayyám was born at Naishapur, in Persia, and enjoyed a good education under a famous Imam, or holy man, of his birthplace. At this school he met two pupils who strangely influenced his life. One was Nizam ul Mulk, who in after

years became Vizier to the Sultan of Persia; the other was Malik Shah, who gained unenviable notoriety as the head of the Assassins, whom the Crusaders knew as "The Old Man of the Mountains." These three made a vow that should one gain fortune he would share it equally with the other two.

When Nizam became Vizier his schoolmates appeared. Hassan was given a lucrative office at court, but soon became involved in palace intrigues and was forced to flee. He afterward became the head of the Ismailians, a sect of fanatics, and his castle in the mountains south of the Caspian gave him the name which all Christians dreaded. His emissaries, sent out to slay his enemies, became known as Assassins. Omar made no demand for office of his old friend, but begged permission to live in "a corner under the shadow of your fortune." So the Vizier gave him a yearly pension, and Omar devoted his remaining years to the study of astronomy, in which he became very proficient, and which earned him many favors from the Sultan.

Omar became widely celebrated for his scientific knowledge and his skill in mathematics, and he formed one of the commis-

sion that revised the Persian calendar. His heretical opinions, shown in the *Rubá'iyát*, gained him many enemies among the strict believers, and especially among the sect of the Sufis, whose faith he ridiculed. But the poet was too well hedged about by royal favor for these religious fanatics to reach him. So Omar ended his life in the scholarly seclusion which he loved, and the only touch of romance in his career is furnished by the provision in his will that his tomb should be in a spot where the north wind might scatter roses over it. One of his disciples relates that years after Omar's death he visited Naishapur and went to his beloved master's tomb. "Lo," he says, "it was just outside a garden, and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so that the stone was hidden under them."

Edward FitzGerald, the translator, who made Omar known to the western world, and especially to English-speaking readers, was one of the quaintest Englishmen of genius that the Victorian age produced. A college chum of men like Tennyson, Thackeray and Bishop Donne, he so impressed these youthful friends with his rare

ability and his engaging personal qualities that they remained his warm admirers throughout life. Apparently without ambition, FitzGerald studied the Greek and Latin classics and made several noteworthy translations in verse, which he printed only for private circulation. Through a friend, Professor Cowell, a profound Oriental scholar, FitzGerald mastered Persian, and it was Cowell who first directed his attention to Omar's *Rubá'iyát*, then little known even to scholars.

The poem evidently made a profound impression on FitzGerald and in 1858 he gave the manuscript of his translation of the *Rubá'iyát* to the publisher, Quaritch. It was printed without the translator's name, but soon gained notice from the praises of Rossetti, Swinburne, Burton and others who recognized the genius of the anonymous author. Ten years later FitzGerald revised his first version and added many new quatrains, but the text as we have it today was the fifth which he gave to the public. Unlike Tennyson, FitzGerald appeared to improve everything he labored over, with the single exception of the first quatrain of the *Rubá'iyát*. In the commonly printed fifth edition he omits a

A Page from an Ancient Persian Manuscript Copy of the "Rubá'iyát" with Miniatures in Color

splendid figure because he happened to use it in another poem. Aside from this the changes are all improvements, which is more than can be said for the revisions of Tennyson.

The authorship of the *Rubá'iyát*, which soon ceased to be a secret, gave FitzGerald great fame during the closing years of his life. FitzGerald also translated a work of Jami, a Persian poet of the fifth century, and he put into English verse a free version of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, two *Œdipus* dramas of Sophocles, and several plays by Calderon, the great Spanish dramatist.

The *Rubá'iyát* is far longer than Gray's *Elegy*, but it occupies much the same position in English literature as this classic of meditation, because of the finish of its verse and a certain beguiling attraction in its thought. The reader of the period who makes a study of the *Rubá'iyát* cannot escape the conviction that old Omar is secretly laughing at his readers. In fact, we come to the conclusion that he had much of FitzGerald's quizzical humor, and consequently believed in few of the heresies that he voices so poetically in his work.

That he was an epicurean and a materialist is very difficult to believe when one considers the simple life that he led and the fact that he voluntarily gave up high official place and the means of securing much wealth. To live the life of a scholar, to dwell in the world of thought and abstraction is not the habit of the man who loves pleasure for its own sake. Hence, though Omar indulges in many panegyrics on the juice of the grape, it is pretty safe to say, from the record left by his disciples, that he cared little for wine and less for kindred pleasures of the senses that he sings of so well. That he could not accept the mystical Moslem faith of his day is not strange, for he had a modern cast of mind. His religion was that of thousands today who long to believe in a future life, but who have not the faith to accept it on trust.

This lack of faith is finely expressed in several quatrains, which might have been written by a poet of today so modern are they in tone, so thoroughly do they embody the new doctrine that happiness or misery depends upon one's own character and acts. The man who cheats and overreaches his neighbor, who lies and deceives those who trust him, who indulges in base

One of the Gilbert James
Illustrations of the "Rubá'iyát" taken
from an Edition Published by
Paul Elder and Company

pleasures through lack of self-restraint, such a man lives in a real hell on earth, plagued by fears of exposure and ever in a mental ferment of unsatisfied desires. Old Omar Khayyám has pictured this doctrine in these two exquisite quatrains, which give a good idea of the quality of his thought, as well as the beauty of FitzGerald's version:

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road
Which to discover we must travel too.

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell;
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell."

The best known quatrain of the *Rubá'iyát*, the one which is always quoted as typical of Omar's epicurean attitude toward life, is this:

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread — and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness —
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

Here we will take leave of Omar. His *Rubá'iyát* is good to read because FitzGerald has clothed his Oriental imagery

in beautiful words that appeal to any one fond of melodious verse. If you wish to see what a great artist can evoke from the thoughts of this Persian poet, look over Elihu Vedder's illustrations of the *Rubâ'iyât* — a series of memory-haunting pictures that are as full of majesty and beauty as the visions of the poet of Naishapur.

The Divine Comedy by Dante

Influence of One of the World's Great Books—The Exiled Florentine's Poem Has Colored the Life and Work of Many Famous Writers.

Some of the world's great books are noteworthy for the profound influence that they have exerted, not only over the contemporaries of the writers, but over many succeeding generations. Some there are which seem to have in them a perennial stimulus to all that is best in human nature; to stretch hands across the gulf of the centuries and to give to people today the flaming zeal, the unquestioning religious faith, the love of beauty and of truth that inspired their authors hundreds of years ago. Among the small number of these transcendently great books stands Dante's *Divine Comedy*, one of the greatest poems

of all ages and one of the tremendous spiritual forces that has colored and shaped and actually transformed many lives.

History is full of examples of the vital influence of Dante's great work only a few years after it was given to the world. Then came a long period of neglect, and it was only with the opening of the nineteenth century that Dante came fairly into his own. The last century saw a great welling up of enthusiasm over this poet and his work. The *Divine Comedy* became the manual of Mazzini and Manzoni and the other leaders of New Italy, and its influence spread over all Europe, as well as throughout this country. Preachers of all creeds, scholars, poets, all acclaimed this great religious epic as one of the chief books of all the ages. In it they found inspiration and stimulus to the spiritual life. Their testimony to its deathless force would fill a volume.

Yet in taking up the *Divine Comedy* the reader who does not know Italian is confronted with the same difficulty as in reading the Greek or Latin poets without knowledge of the two classical languages. He must be prepared to get only a dim appreciation of the beauties of the original,

PORTRAIT OF DANTE
BY GIOTTO DI BONDONE

because Dante is essentially Italian, and the form in which his verse is cast cannot be reproduced in English without great loss. On this subject of translating poetry George E. Woodberry, one of the ablest of American literary critics, says:

"To read a great poet in a translation is like seeing the sun through smoked glass. * * * To understand a *canzone* of Dante or Leopardi one must feel as an Italian feels; to appreciate its form he must know the music of the form as only the Italian language can hold and eternize it. Translation is impotent to overcome either of these difficulties."

This is the scholar's estimate; yet Emerson, who saw as clearly as any man of his time and who grasped the essentials of all the great books, favored translations and declared he got great good from them. At any rate, the average reader has no time to learn Italian in order to appreciate Dante. The best he can do is to read a good translation and then help out his own impressions by the comment and appreciation of such lovers of the great poet as Ruskin, Carlyle, Lowell and Longfellow. The best translation is Cary's version, which was revised and brought out in its present form

in 1844, just before the translator's death. It is written in blank verse, easy and melodious.

To understand even an outline of the *Divine Comedy* one must know a few facts about the life of Dante and the experiences that matured his mind and found expression in this great poem. Dante was born in Florence in 1265, of a good Italian family, but reduced to poverty. At eighteen he wrote his first poems, which were recognized by Cavalcanti, the foremost Italian poet of his day. He became a soldier and he was involved in the petty wars between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. In 1290 Beatrice, the woman whom he adored and who served as the inspiration of all his poetry, died, and soon after he gathered under the title *Vita Nuova*, or *New Life*, the prose narrative, studded with lyrics, which is one of the great love songs of all ages. This is the highest essence of romantic love, a love so sublimated that it never seeks physical gratification. Praise of his lady, contemplation of her angelic beauty of face and loveliness of mind and character — these are the forms in which Dante's love finds its exquisite expression. And this same love and adoration of Bea-

trice will be found the chief inspiration of the *Divine Comedy*.

For ten years after the death of Beatrice Dante was immersed in political conflicts. He took a prominent part in the government of Florence, but in 1302 he was sentenced with fifteen other citizens of that city to be burned alive should he at any time come within the confines of Florence. For three years the poet hoped to succeed in regaining his power in Florence, but when these hopes finally failed he turned to the expression of his spiritual conquests, to let the world know how the love of one woman and the desire to "keep vigil for the good of the world" could transform a man's soul. So in poverty and distress, wandering from one Italian city to another, Dante wrote most of his great epic. His final years were spent in Ravenna, where many friends and disciples gathered about him. The *Divine Comedy* was completed only a short time before Dante's death, which occurred on September 14, 1321.

This great poem waited nearly six hundred years before its merits were fully appreciated. In form it was drawn directly from the sixth book of Virgil's *Æneid*, and

to make this likeness all the stronger Dante makes Virgil his guide on the imaginary journey that he describes through hell and purgatory. Yet though everything on this journey is pictured in minute detail, the whole is purely symbolical. Dante depicts himself carried by Virgil, who represents Human Philosophy, through the horrors of hell and purgatory to the abode of happiness in *Paradise*.

This narrative is full of allusions to the life of Italy of his day. His Inferno is really Italy governed by corrupt Popes and political leaders, and he shows by the torments of the damned how the souls of the condemned suffer because they have elected evil instead of good. In the Purgatory we have the far more cheerful view of man, removing the vices of the world and recovering the moral and intellectual freedom which fits him for a blessed estate in *Paradise*.

In these two parts of his poem Dante shows how love is the transfiguring force in working the miracle of moral regeneration. And this love is without any trace of carnal passion; it is the supreme aspiration, which has such power that it makes its possessor ruler over his own spirit and

CANTO. XIX. DELLA PRIMA CANTICA DI DANTHE.

Questo el decimonono chanto : nel quale dimostra che nella terza bolgia sono puniti esimoniaci : E/ simonia uendita o compera delle chose sacre et spirituali con denari et chon chose equiualenti a denari. Adunque chi uende o compera esecramenti della chesa : o alchuna degnita spirituale , o benificii. o altre chose simili ; delle quali el nero prezo e/ non oro ne argento : Ma sanctita di uita et di costumi ; et uirtu ; et doctrina e/ simoniaco ; elquale nome uiene da Simon magho ; el quale fu el primo che tento questa scelleratezza nel nuouo testamento. Ilche accioche piu apertamente sintenda e/ scripto ne giacti degl appostoli ; che dopo lamorte del prothomartyre Stephano philippo predicava uerbum dei in Samaria ; et conuertiua molti per gli incredibili miracholi che facea. Era nel medesimo tempo in quella citta Simone philosopho et magho ; elquale per le chose che facea con sue arti maghe era insomma auctorita et reputatione. Chostui insieme chon glialtri credecte a Philippo et baptezossi. Ma anchora ne baptezati di samaria non era lo spirito sancto : Ma uenuti poi Pietro et Ioanni ororono pe baptezati ; et dopo loratione posono loro le mani adosso ; et quegli riceuettono lo spirito sancto . Ilperche parendo gran chosa a Simone che pel porre della mano lo spirito sancto uenissi/offerse pecunia a giapostoli ; et loro gli dessino tale potesta ; che ponendo la mano adosso al baptezato gli uenissi lo spirito sancto ; alquale rispose Piero La pecunia tua sia teco in perditione. Et certo perche tu stimasti che el dono di dio si potessi hauere per pecunia tu non hai parte ne sorte in questo sermone ; Et el cuor tuo non e/ diricto nel conspecto di dio. Tienti la tua pecunia : et priegha idio se possibile e/ che questa cogitatione si parta del cuor tuo ; perche io ti ueggio esse re nel fiele della nariatudine : et nel uincolo della iniquita. Da questo Simone adunque sono decti simoniaci nel nuouo testamento quegli che contractano chon prezo le chose sacre ; Chome nel testamento uecchio erono denominati da Giezi seruo dheliseo propheta Curo Heliseo propheta dalla lebbra Naaman principe della militia del re di Syria in uirtu di dio. Ne uolle ricenere alchun premio da lui : ben che gihauessi arrechati assai thesori. Ma Giezi seruo dheliseo partitosi gia Naaman glando drieto et ragiunselo ; et finxe che due de figliuoli de propheti fussino uenuti allui dal monte ephraim ; et domando

Simon magho o miseri sequaci
che le chose di dio che di bontade
debbon essere spose : et uoi rapaci
Per oro et per argento adulterate
hor conuien che per uoi suoni la tromba
pero che nella terza bolgia state
Gia eravamo alla sequente tomba
montati dello scoglo in quella parte
chappunto soural mezo elfossio piomba.

master of his destiny. What power, what passion resided in the mind of this old poet that it could so charge his words that these should inspire the greatest writers of an alien nation, six hundred years after his death, to pay homage to the moving spirit of his verse. In all literature nothing can be found to surpass the influence of this poem of Dante's, struck off at white heat at the end of a life filled with the bitterness of worldly defeats and losses, but glorified by these visions of a spiritual conquest, greater than any of the victories of this world.

Little space is left here to dwell on the most remarkable feature of Dante's great poem—its influence in fertilizing minds centuries after the death of its author. Florence, which once drove the poet into exile, has tried many times to recover the body of the man who has long been recognized as her greatest son. And the New and United Italy, which was ushered in by the labors of Mazzini and others, regards Dante as the prophet of the nation, the symbol of a regenerated land. All the great modern writers bear enthusiastic testimony to the influence of Dante.

Carlyle said of him: "True souls in all

generations of the world who look on this Dante will find a brotherhood in him; the deep sincerity of his thoughts, his woes and hopes, will speak likewise to their sincerity; they will feel that this Dante was once a brother."

Lowell, who attributed his love of learning to the study of the Florentine poet, says: "It is because they find in him a spur to noble aims, a secure refuge in that defeat which the present day seems, that they prize Dante who know and love him best. He is not only a great poet, but an influence — part of the soul's resources in time of trouble."

This tribute to the greatness of Dante cannot be ended more effectively than by referring to the sonnets of Longfellow. Our New England poet found solace in his bitter grief over the tragic death of his wife in translating the *Divine Comedy* in metrical form. Six sonnets he wrote, depicting the comfort and peace that he found in the study of the great Florentine. The last sonnet, in which Longfellow eloquently describes the increasing influence of Dante among people in all lands, is among the finest things that he ever wrote and forms a fitting end to this brief study of Dante:

O star of morning and of liberty!
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines
Above the darkness of the Apennines,
Forerunner of the day that is to be!
The voices of the city and the sea,
The voices of the mountains and the pines,
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!
Thy fame is blown abroad from all the heights,
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard,
As of a mighty wind, and men devout,
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,
In their own language hear thy wondrous word,
And many are amazed and many doubt.

How to Get the Best Out of Books

Is the Higher Education an Absolute Necessity?—Desire to Gain Knowledge and Culture Will Make One Master of All the Best Books.

In changing from the ancient and mediæval world to the modern world of books there is a gap which cannot be bridged. A few writers flourished in this interval, but they are not worth consideration in the general scheme of reading which has been laid down in these articles. So the change must be made from the works that have been noticed to the first great writers of England who deserve a place in this popular course of reading. But before starting on these English writers of some of the world's great books I wish to say a few words on the general subject of books and reading, prompted mainly by a letter re-

ceived from a Shasta county correspondent. The writer is a man who has evidently devoted thought to the subject, and his opinions will probably voice the conclusions of many others who are eager to read the best books, but who fancy that they lack the requisite mental training. Here is the gist of this letter, which is worth reproduction, because it probably represents the mental attitude of a large number of people who have lacked early opportunities of study:

"The trouble with the 'Five-foot shelf of books' is that it is too long for the average man and intellectually it is up out of his reach. He can, perhaps, manage the Bible, for he can get commentaries on almost any part of it, and on occasion can hear sermons preached, but he will get very little benefit from a perusal of most of the others for the simple reason that he has not education enough in order to understand them. To read Shakespeare one should have at least a high school education, and about all the others need something even better in the way of schooling. Is it not possible to obtain this comfort, instruction and entertainment by a perusal of more modern books that the average man can understand?

"We are apt to look back to the days of our youth as a time of sunshine and flowers, a time, in fact, of all things good; so, also, we are prone to give the men of ancient days some a golden crown, and some a halo, and ascribe to them an importance beyond their real value to us of these later days. Modern times and

modern nations are rich in material well worth reading. Such books have the advantage in that the average man can understand them, and can be entertained and edified thereby.

"People who are already in possession of culture and education are not so much in need of advice concerning their choice of books, for they have the ability to make proper discrimination. It is the common people, those who have been unable to obtain this higher education and culture, that need the assistance to promote the proper growth of their intellectual and spiritual lives."

There is much in this letter which is worthy of thought. It is evidently the sincere expression of a man who has tried to appreciate the world's great classics and has failed, mainly because he has had this mental consciousness that he was not prepared to read and appreciate them. It is this attitude toward the world's great books which I wished to remove in these articles. It has been my aim to write for the men and women who have not had the advantage of a high school or college education. Any higher education is of great benefit, but my experience has shown me that the person who has a genuine thirst for knowledge will gain more through self-culture than the careless or indifferent student who may have all the advantages of the best high school or university training.

The man or woman who is genuinely in earnest and who wishes to repair defects of early training will go further with poor tools and limited opportunities than the indolent or careless student who has within reach the best equipment of a great university. All that is necessary to understand and appreciate the great books which have been noticed in this series of articles is an ordinary grammar school education and the desire to gain knowledge and culture. Given this strong desire to know and to appreciate good books and one will go far, even though he may be handicapped by a very imperfect education.

My correspondent declares that he does not think Shakespeare and other great books mentioned may be appreciated without the benefit of a high school education. This seems to me an overstatement of the case. Of course, blank verse is more difficult to follow than prose, but much of Shakespeare's work, though he uses a far richer vocabulary than the King James' translators of the Bible, is nearly as simple, because the dramatist appeals to the fundamental passions and emotions of men, which have not changed materially since the days of Elizabeth.

That this is true is shown whenever a play of Shakespeare's is given by a dramatic company which includes one or two fine actors. The people in the audience who are accustomed to cheap melodrama will be as profoundly affected by Othello or Shylock, or even by Hamlet, as those who are intimately familiar with the text and have seen all the great actors in these roles from the time of the elder Booth. Actors and dramatic critics have often commented on the power that resides in Shakespeare's words to move an uncultured audience far more strongly than it can be moved by turgid melodrama. And even in a play like *Hamlet*, which is introspective and demands some thought on the part of the audience, there is never any listlessness in front of the footlights when a really great actor depicts the woes and the indecision of the melancholy Dane.

The same thing holds good in reading, if one will only bring to the work the same keen interest that moves the audience in the theater. Here are the same words, the same unfolding of the plot, the same skillful development of character, the same fatality which follows weakness or indecision that may be seen on the stage; only

the reader, whether he works alone or in company with others, must bring to his labor a keen desire to understand the dramatist, and he must be willing to accept the aid of the commentators who have made Shakespearean study so simple and attractive a task.

Get an ordinary school or college edition of one of Shakespeare's plays, read the notes, look up any words that are unfamiliar to you, even though the editor may have ignored them. Then, after you have mastered the text, read what the best critics have said of the play and its characters. You will now be in a condition to enjoy thoroughly the careful reading of the play as literature, and it is from such reading, when all the difficulties of the text have been removed, that literary culture comes. Always read aloud, when possible, because in this way alone can you train the ear to the cadence of the verse and learn to enjoy the music of the best poetry.

From my own experience, I would suggest the formation of small reading clubs of four or six persons, meeting at regular times. The members should be of congenial tastes, and it should be understood that promptness and regularity of attend-

ance are vital. Such a club will be able to accomplish far more work than the solitary reader, and the stimulus of other minds will keep the interest keen and unflagging. The best scheme for such a club is to set a certain amount of reading and have each member go over the allotted portion carefully before the club meeting. Then all will be prepared to make suggestions and to remove any difficulties.

Such a club, meeting two or three evenings in a week, will be able to get through a very large amount of good reading in a few months, and what seemed labor at first will soon become a genuine pleasure and a means of intellectual recreation. No one knows better than myself the up-hill work that attends solitary reading or study. Not one in a thousand can be counted on to continue reading alone, month after month, with no stimulus, except perhaps occasional talks with some one who is interested in the same books. It is dreary work at best, relieved only by the joy of mental growth and development. To share one's pleasure in a book is like sharing enjoyment in a splendid view or a fine work of art: it helps to fix that book in the mind. One never knows whether he has thoroughly

mastered a book until he attempts to put in words his impressions of the volume and of the author. To discuss favorite books with congenial associates is one of the great pleasures of life, as well as one of the best tests of knowledge.

With all the equipment that has been devised in the way of notes and comment by the best editors, the text of the great books of the world should offer no difficulties to one who understands English and who has an ordinary vocabulary. The very fact that some of these old writers have novel points of view should be a stimulus to the reader; for in this age of the limited railroad train, the telephone, the automobile and the aeroplane, it is well occasionally to be reminded that Shakespeare and the writers of the Bible knew as much about human nature as we know today, and that their philosophy was far saner and simpler than ours, and far better to use as a basis in making life worth living.

Milton's Paradise Lost and Other Poems

A Book That Ranks Close to the English Bible — It Tells the Story of Satan's Revolt, the Fall of Man and the Expulsion from Eden.

In beginning with the great books of the modern world two works stand out in English literature as preëminent, ranking close to the Bible in popular regard for nearly four hundred years. These are Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. To those of New England blood whose memory runs back over forty years these two books fill much of the youthful horizon, for, besides the Bible, these were almost the only books that were allowed to be read on Sunday. It seems strange in these days of religious toleration that Sunday reading should be prescribed, but it was a mournful fact in my early days

Portrait of Milton
after the Original Crayon Drawing from
Life by William Faithorne at
Bayfordbury, Herts

and it forced me, with many others, to cultivate Milton and Bunyan, when my natural inclinations would have been toward lighter and easier reading. But that old Puritan rule, like its companion rule of committing to memory on Sunday a certain number of verses in the Bible, served one in good stead, for it fixed in the plastic mind of childhood some of the best literature that the world has produced.

Milton's fame rests mainly on his *Paradise Lost* and on his sonnets and minor poems, although he wrote much in prose which was far in advance of his age in liberality of thought. He was a typical English Puritan, with much of the Cromwellian sternness of creed, but with a fine Greek culture that made him one of the great scholars of the world. His early life was singularly full and beautiful, and this peace and delight in all lovely things in nature and art may be found reflected in such poems as *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and in the perfect masque of *Comus*.

His later life, after many years of good service to the state, was clouded by blindness and loss of fortune and menaced by fear of a shameful death on the gallows. And it was in these years, when the sun

of his prosperity had set and when large honors had been succeeded by contumely and final neglect, that the old poet produced the great work which assured his fame as long as the English language endures.

Milton came of a good English family and he had the supreme advantage of splendid early training in all the knowledge of his time. The great Greek classics exercised the strongest influence over his youthful mind, but he knew all that the Latin writers had produced, and he acquired such a mastery of the native tongue of Virgil and Cicero that he wrote it like his own, and produced many Latin poems which have never been surpassed for easy command of this ancient language. Then for twenty years succeeded a period in which Milton devoted his great talents to the defense of his country in controversial papers, that are still the delight of scholars because of their high thought, their keen logic and their sonorous prose.

The noblest of these papers is that plea for the liberty of a free press which is buried under the long Greek name, *Areopagitica*. It contains some of the finest passages in defense of freedom of thought

and speech. As Foreign Secretary to the Council of State under Cromwell, Milton labored ten years, and it was his voice that defended the acts of the Puritan government, and it was his pen that sounded the warning to monarchy, which was not heard again until the roaring French mob sacked the Bastile and mocked the King and Queen at Versailles.

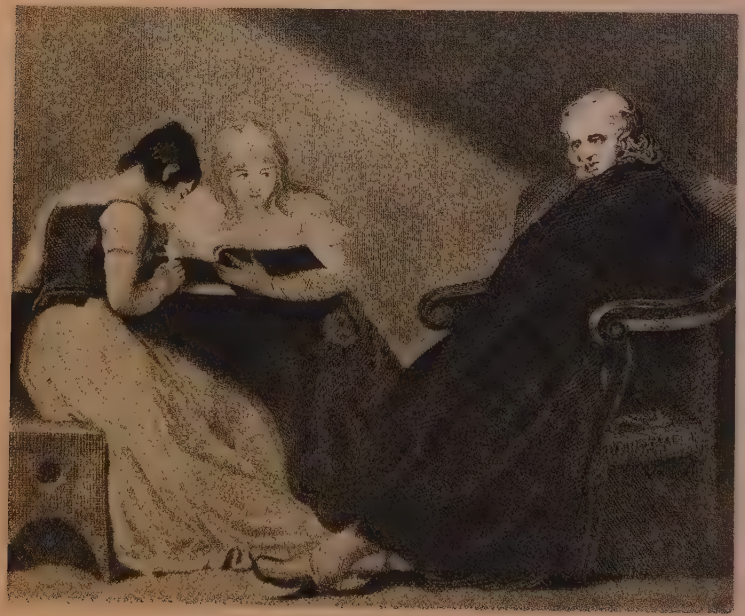
At the age of forty-five Milton was stricken with total blindness, but he did not give up any of his activities under this crushing affliction. In these dark days also he learned what it was to have a home without peace or comfort and to be vexed daily by ungrateful children. When the monarchy was restored Milton was forced into retirement, and narrowly escaped the gallows for his part in sending Charles I to the block.

Thus in his old age, beaten down by misfortune, galled by neglect, he turned to the development of that rich poetic faculty which had lain fallow for a score of years. And in three years of silent meditation he produced *Paradise Lost*, which ranks very close to the Bible in religious fervor and in splendor of genuine poetic inspiration. It is Biblical in its subject, for it includes the

revolt of the rebellious angels, the splendid picture of the Garden of Eden and the noble conception of the creation of the world. It is Biblical, also, in a certain sustained sweep of the imagination, such as is seen in the great picture of the burning lake, in which Satan first awakes from the shock of his fall, and in the impressive speeches that mark his plan of campaign against the Lord who had thrown him and his cohorts into outer darkness.

Yet this poem is modeled on the great epics of antiquity, and much of the splendor of the style is due to allusions to Greek and Roman history and mythology, with which Milton's mind was saturated. In other men this constant reference to the classics would be called pedantry; in him it was simply the struggle of a great mind to find fitting expression for his thoughts, just as in a later age we see the same process repeated in the essays of Macaulay, which are equally rich in references to the writers of all ages, whose works had been made a permanent part of this scholar's mental possessions.

Some present-day critics of Milton's *Paradise Lost* have declared that his subject is obsolete and that his verse repels the



Milton Dictating to His Daughters—After an Engraving by W. C. Edwards from the Famous Painting by Romney

modern reader. As well say that the average unlettered reader finds the Bible dull and commonplace. Even if you do not know the historical fact or the mythological legend to which Milton refers, you can enjoy the music of his verse; and if you take the trouble to look up these allusions you will find that each has a meaning, and that each helps out the thought which the poet tries to express. This work of looking up the references which Milton makes to history and mythology is not difficult, and it will reward the patient reader with much knowledge that would not come to him in any other way. Behind Milton's grand style, as behind the splendid garments of a great monarch, one may see at times the man who influenced his own age by his genius and whose power has gone on through the ages, stimulating the minds of poets and sages and men of action, girding up their loins for conflict, breathing into them the spirit which demands freedom of speech and conscience.

Milton's style in *Paradise Lost* is unrhymed heroic verse, which seems to move easily with the thought of the poet. The absence of rhyme permits the poet to carry over most of his lines and to save the

verse from that monotony which marks the artificial verse of even great literary artists like Dryden and Pope. Here is a passage from the opening of the second book, which depicts Satan in power in the Court of Hades, and which may be taken as a specimen of Milton's fine style:

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
> Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
> Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
> Satan exalted sat.

And here, in a short description of the adventures of a body of Satan's fallen angels in their quest for escape from the lower regions to which they had been condemned, may be found all the salient features of Milton's style at its best:

> Through many a dark and dreary vale
> They passed, and many a region dolorous,
> O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
> Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens and shades of death—
> A universe of death, which God by curse
> Created evil, for evil only good;
> Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,
> Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
> Abominable, inutterable and worse
> Than fables yet have feigned or fear conceived,
> Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimæras dire.

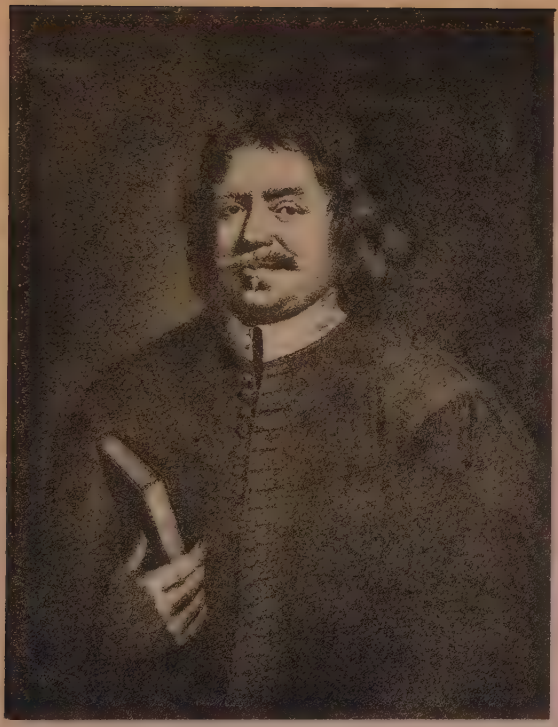
In contrast to this resounding verse, which enables the poet to soar to lofty heights of imagination, turn to some of Milton's early work, the two beautiful classical idyls, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the fine *Hymn to the Nativity*, and the mournful cadences of *Lycidas*, the poet's lament over the death of a beloved young friend. But in parting with Milton one should not neglect his sonnets, which rank with Wordsworth's as among the finest in the language. This brief notice cannot be ended more appropriately than with Milton's memorable sonnet on his blindness:

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Pilgrim's Progress the Finest of All Allegories

Bunyan's Story Full of the Spirit of the Bible—The Simple Tale of Christian's Struggles and Triumph Appeals to Old and Young.

No contrast could be greater than that between Milton and John Bunyan unless it be the contrast between their masterpieces, *Paradise Lost* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. One was born in the purple and had all the advantages that flow from wealth and liberal education; the other was the son of a tinker, who had only a common school education and who from boyhood was forced to work for a living. Milton produced a poem nearly every line of which is rich in allusions to classical literature and mythology; Bunyan wrote an allegory, as simple in style as the English Bible, but which was destined to have a sale in Eng-



Portrait of John Bunyan
after the Oil Painting by
Sadler

lish-speaking countries second only to the Bible itself, from which its inspiration was drawn.

Milton knew many lands and peoples; he was one of the great scholars of all ages, and in literary craftsmanship has never been surpassed by any writer. Bunyan never traveled beyond the bounds of England; he knew only two books well, the Bible and Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, yet he produced one of the great literary masterpieces which profoundly influenced his own time and which has been the delight of thousands of readers in England and America, because of the simple human nature and the tremendous spiritual force that he put into the many trials and the ultimate victory of Christian.

John Bunyan was born in 1628 near Bedford, England, and he lived for sixty years. His father was a tinker, a calling that was held in some disrepute because of its association with wandering gypsies. The boy was a typical Saxon, large and strong, full of rude health; but by the time he was ten years old he began to show signs of an imagination that would have wrecked a weaker body. Bred in the rigid Calvinism of his day, he began to have

visions of the consequences of sin; he began to see that he was perilously near to the consuming fire which the preachers declared was in store for all who did not repent and seek the Lord.

The stories of his early years remind one of the experiences of Rousseau. Between the man of supreme literary genius and the epileptic there is a very narrow line, and more than once Bunyan seemed about to overstep this danger line. At seventeen the youth joined the Parliamentary army and saw some service. The sudden death of the soldier next to him in the ranks made a profound impression upon his sensitive mind; he seemed to see in it the hand of the Lord which had been stretched out to protect him.

On his return from the wars he married a country girl, who brought him as a marriage portion a large number of pious books. These Bunyan devoured, and they served as fuel to his growing sense of the terrible results of sin. Of his spiritual wrestlings in those days he has given a very good account in *Grace Abounding*, a highly colored autobiography in which he is represented as the chief of sinners, driven to repentance by the power of God. The fact

is that he was a very fine young Puritan and his only offense lay in his propensity to profane swearing.

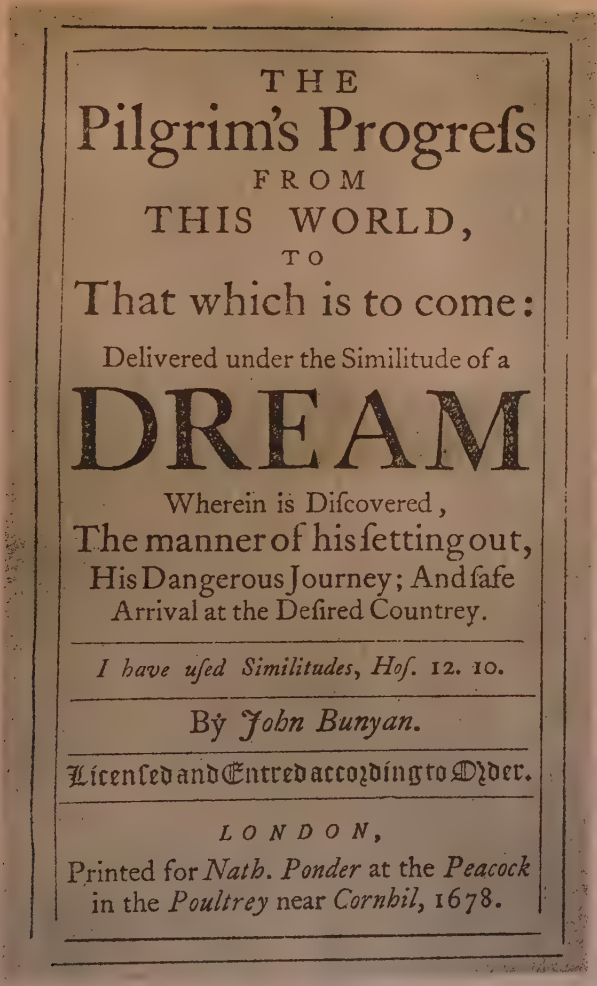
Out of this mental and moral turmoil Bunyan emerged as a wayside preacher who finally came to address small country congregations. Soon he became known far and wide as a man who could move audiences to tears, so strong was the feeling that he put into his words, so convincing was the picture that he drew of his own evil life and the peace that came when he accepted the mercy of the Lord. He went up and down the countryside and he preached in London.

Finally, in 1660, he was arrested under the new law which forbade dissenters to preach and was thrown into Bedford jail. He had then a wife and three children, the youngest a blind girl whom he loved more than the others. To provide for them he learned to make lace. The authorities were anxious to free Bunyan because his life had been without reproach and he had made many friends, but he refused to take the oath that he would not preach. For twelve years he remained in Bedford jail, and it is in these years that he conceived the plot of *Pilgrim's Progress* and wrote most of the

book, although it was three years after his release before the volume was finally in form for publication.

Bunyan in a rhymed introduction to the book apologizes for the story form, which he feared would injure the work in the eyes of his Puritan neighbors, but the allegory proved a great success from the outset. No less than ten editions were issued in fourteen years. It made Bunyan one of the best known men of his time and it added greatly to his influence as a preacher. He wrote a number of other works, including a fine allegory, *The Holy War*, but none of these approached the *Pilgrim's Progress* in popularity.

When one takes up the *Pilgrim's Progress* in these days it is always with something of the same feeling that the book inspired in childhood. Then it ranked with the *Arabian Nights* as a thrilling story, though there were many tedious passages in which Christian debated religious topics with his companions. Still, despite these drawbacks, the book was a great story, full of the keenest human interest, with Christian struggling through dangers on every hand; with Giant Despair and Apollyon as real as the terrible genii of Arabian story,



THE
Pilgrim's Progress
FROM
THIS WORLD,
TO
That which is to come:
Delivered under the Similitude of a
DREAM
Wherein is Discovered,
The manner of his setting out,
His Dangerous Journey; And safe
Arrival at the Desired Countrey.

I have used Similitudes, Hos. 12. 10.

By *John Bunyan.*

Licensed and Entred according to Order.

LONDON,
Printed for *Nath. Ponder* at the *Peacock*
in the *Poultrey* near *Cornhil*, 1678.

FACSIMILE OF THE
TITLE PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF
"THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS"

and with Great-heart a champion who more than matched the mysterious Black Knight in *Ivanhoe*.

Bunyan, out of his spiritual wrestlings, imagined his conflict with the powers of evil as a journey which he made Christian take from his home town along the straight and narrow way to the Shining Gate. Reproduced from his own imaginative sufferings were the flounderings in the Slough of Despond and his experiences in the Vale of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow of Death and in Vanity Fair, where he lost the company of Faithful.

It is difficult, unless one is very familiar with the book, to separate the adventures in the first part from those in the second part, which deals with the experiences of Christiana and her children. It is in this second part that Great-heart, the knightly champion of the faith, appears, as well as the muck-raker, who has been given so much prominence in these last few years as the type of the magazine writers, who are eager to drag down into the dirt the reputations of prominent men. In fact, Bunyan's allegory has been a veritable mine to all literary people who have followed him. For a hundred years his book

remained known only to the poor for whom it was written. Then its literary merits were perceived, and since then it has held its place as second only to the Bible in English-speaking lands.

Bunyan, in his years in prison, studied the Bible so that his mind was saturated with its phraseology, and he knew it almost by heart. Every page of *Pilgrim's Progress* bears witness to this close and loving study. The language of the Bible is often used, but it blends so perfectly with the simple, direct speech of Bunyan's characters that it reads like his own work. The only thing that betrays it is the reference to book and verse. A specimen of Bunyan's close reading of the Bible may be found in this list of curiosities in the museum of the House Beautiful on the Delectable Mountains:

"They showed him Moses' rod; the hammer and nail with which Jael slew Sisera; the pitcher, trumpets and lamps, too, with which Gideon put to flight the armies of Midian. Then they showed him the ox's goad wherewith Shambar slew six hundred men. They showed him also the jaw-bone with which Samson did such mighty feats. They showed him, moreover, the sling and stone with which David slew Goliath of Gath; and the sword, also, with which their Lord will kill the Man of Sin, in the day that he shall rise up to prey."

And here is a part of Bunyan's description of the fight between Apollyon and Christian in the Valley of Humiliation:

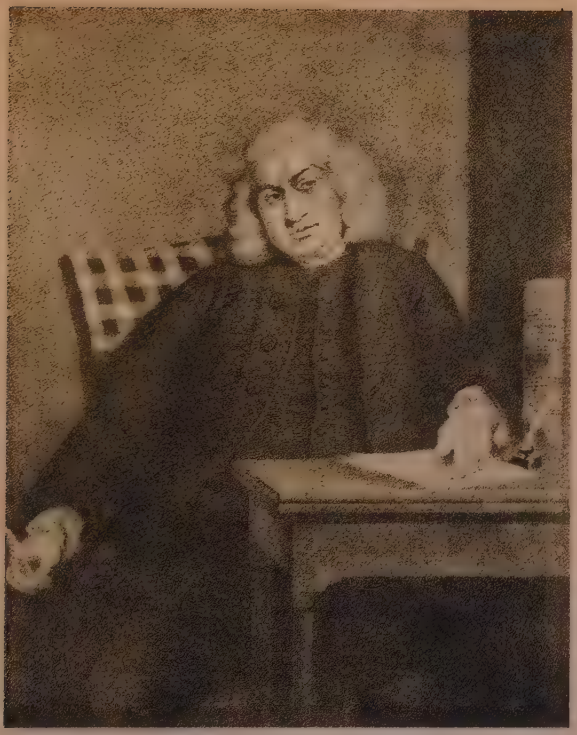
"Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said: 'I am void of fear in this matter; prepare thyself to die, for I swear by my infernal den that thou shalt go no further; here will I spill thy soul.' * * * In this combat no man can imagine, unless he had seen and heard as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made, nor what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile, and look upward; but it was the dreadfulest sight that I ever saw."

The miracle of this book is that it should have been written by a man who had little education and small knowledge of the great world, yet that it should be a literary masterpiece in the simple perfection of its form, and that it should be so filled with wisdom that the wisest man may gain something from its pages. Literary genius has never been shown in greater measure than in this immortal allegory by the poor tinker of Bedfordshire.

Old Dr. Johnson and His Boswell

His Great Fame Due to His Admirer's Biography—Boswell's Work Makes the Doctor the Best Known Literary Man of His Age.

The last of the worthies of old English literature is Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose monumental figure casts a long shadow over most of his contemporaries. The man whom Boswell immortalized and made as real to us today as though he actually lived and worked and browbeat his associates in our own time, is really the last of the great eighteenth century writers in style, in ways of thought and in feeling. Gibbon, who was his contemporary, appears far more modern than Johnson because, in his religious views and in his way of appraising historical characters, the author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Em-*



PORTRAIT OF DR. JOHNSON
FROM THE ORIGINAL PICTURE BY
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS OWNED BY BOSWELL
THIS ENGRAVING FORMED THE FRONTISPIECE OF
THE FIRST EDITION
OF BOSWELL'S FAMOUS "LIFE"

pire was a hundred years in advance of his time. Dr. Johnson therefore may be regarded as the last of the worthies who have made English literature memorable in the eighteenth century, and his work may fittingly conclude this series of articles on the good old books.

Yet in considering Dr. Johnson's work we have the curious anomaly of a man who is not only far greater than anything he ever wrote, but who depends for his fame upon a biographer much inferior to himself in scholarship and in literary ability. *The Life of Samuel Johnson by James Boswell Esquire* is the title of the book that has preserved for us one of the most interesting figures in all literature. Commonly it is known as *Boswell's Johnson*. Though written over a hundred years ago, it still stands unrivaled among the world's great biographies.

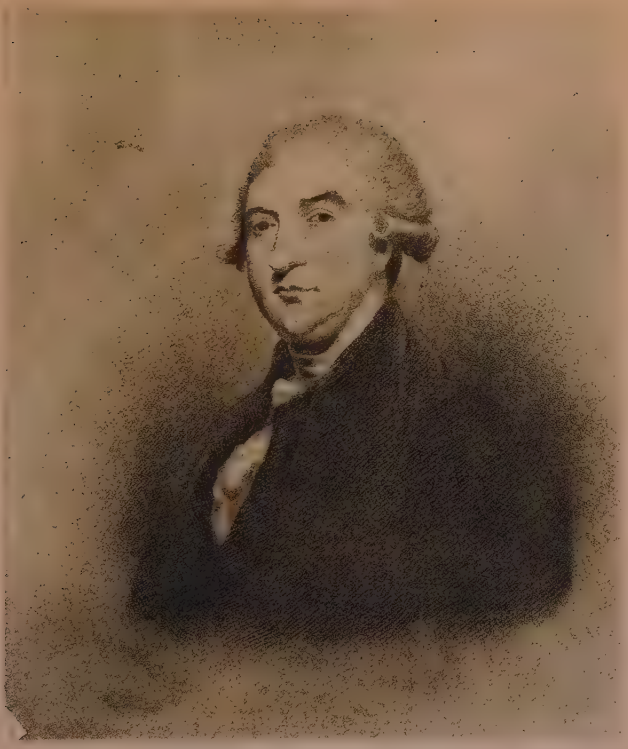
Boswell had in him the makings of a great reporter, for no detail of Johnson's life, appearance, talk or manner escaped his keen eye, and for years it was his custom to set down every night in notebooks all the table talk and other conversation of the great man whom he worshiped. In this way Boswell gathered little by little a mass

of material which he afterward recast into his great work. Jotted down when every word was fresh in his memory, these conversations by the old doctor are full of meat.

If Johnson was ever worsted in the wit combats that took place at his favorite club, then Boswell fails to record it; but hundreds of instances are given of the doughty old Englishman's rough usage of an adversary when he found himself hard pressed. As Goldsmith aptly put it: "If his pistol missed fire, he would knock you down with the butt end."

Samuel Johnson was the son of a bookseller of Litchfield. He was born in 1709 and died in 1784. His early education was confined to a grammar school of his native town. The boy was big of figure, but he early showed traces of a scrofulous taint, which not only disfigured his face but made him morose and inclined to depression. But his mind was very keen and he read very widely. When nineteen years of age he went up to Oxford and surprised his tutors by the extent of his miscellaneous reading.

His college life was wretched because of his poverty, and the historical incident of



Portrait of James Boswell
after a Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds
Engraved by E. Finden

the youth's scornful rejection of a new pair of shoes, left outside his chamber door, is probably true. Certain it is that he could not have fitted into the elegant life of most of the undergraduates of Pembroke College, although today his name stands among the most distinguished of its scholars. In 1731 he left Oxford without a degree, and, after an unhappy experience as a school usher, he married a widow old enough to be his mother and established a school to prepare young men for college. Among his pupils was David Garrick, who became the famous actor. In 1737 Johnson, in company with Garrick, tramped to London. In the great city which he came to love he had a very hard time for years. He served as a publisher's hack and he knew from personal experience the woes of Grub-street writers.

His first literary hit was made with a poem, *London*, and this was followed by the *Life of Richard Savage*, in which he told of the miseries of the writer without regular employment. Next followed his finest poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Then Johnson started a weekly paper, *The Rambler*, in imitation of *The Spectator*, and ran it regularly for about two years. For some

time Johnson had been considering the publication of a dictionary of the English language. He issued his prospectus in 1747 and inscribed the work to Lord Chesterfield. He did not secure any help from the noble lord, and when Chesterfield showed some interest in the work seven years after, Johnson wrote an open letter to the nobleman, which is one of the masterpieces of English satire. In 1762 Johnson accepted a Government pension of £300 a year, and after that he lived in comparative comfort. The best literary work of his later years was his *Lives of the Poets*, which extended to ten volumes.

Johnson was not an accurate scholar, nor was he a graceful writer, like Goldsmith; but he had a force of mind and a vigor of language that made him the greatest talker of his day. He was one of the founders of a literary club in 1764 which numbered among its members Gibbon, Burke, Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds and other famous men of genius. Though he was unpolished in manners, ill dressed and uncouth, Johnson was easily the leader in the debates of this club, and he remained its dominating force until the day of his death.

THE

LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

COMPREHENDING

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS STUDIES AND NUMEROUS WORKS, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER;

A SERIES OF HIS EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE AND CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY EMINENT PERSONS;

AND

VARIOUS ORIGINAL PIECES OF HIS COMPOSITION, NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

THE WHOLE EXHIBITING A VIEW OF LITERATURE AND LITERARY MEN IN GREAT-BRITAIN, FOR NEAR HALF A CENTURY, DURING WHICH HE FLOURISHED.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

——Quò fit ut omnis
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
Vita senis.—— HORAT.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HENRY BALDWIN,
FOR CHARLES DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.
MDCC XCI.

FACSIMILE OF THE TITLE PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF BOSWELL'S "LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON"—THIS HAS PROVED TO BE THE MOST POPULAR BIOGRAPHY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The best idea of Dr. Johnson's verse may be gained from *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. These are not great poetry. The verse is of the style which Pope produced, but which the modern taste rejects because of its artificial form. Yet there are many good lines in these two poems and they reflect the author's wide reading as well as his knowledge of human life. *The Lives of the Poets* are far better written than Johnson's early work, and they contain many interesting incidents and much keen criticism. These, with some of Johnson's prayers and his letter to Lord Chesterfield, include about all that the modern reader will care to go through.

The Chesterfield letter is a little masterpiece of satire. Johnson, it must be borne in mind, had dedicated the prospectus of his Dictionary to Chesterfield, but he had been virtually turned away from this patron's door with the beggarly gift of £10. For seven years he wrought at his desk, often hungry, ragged and exposed to the weather, without any assistance; but when the end was in sight and the great work was passing through the press, the noble lord deigned to write two review articles, praising the work. And here is a

bit of Dr. Johnson's incisive sarcasm in the famous letter to the selfish nobleman:

"Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it."

Of Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson* only a few words can be said. To treat it properly one should have an entire article like this, for it is one of the great books of the world. A good preparation for taking it up is the reading of the reviews of it by Macaulay and Carlyle. These two essays, among the most brilliant of their authors' work, give striking pictures of Boswell and of the man who was the dictator of English literature for thirty years. Then take up Boswell himself in such a handy edition as that in Everyman's Library, in two volumes. Read the book in spare half hours, when you are not hurried, and you will get from it much pleasure as well as profit. It is packed with amusement and informa-

Painting by Eyre Crowe of Dr. Johnson, Boswell and Goldsmith at the Mitre Tavern, Fleet Street the Scene of many Word Combats between the Doughty Doctor and His Associates

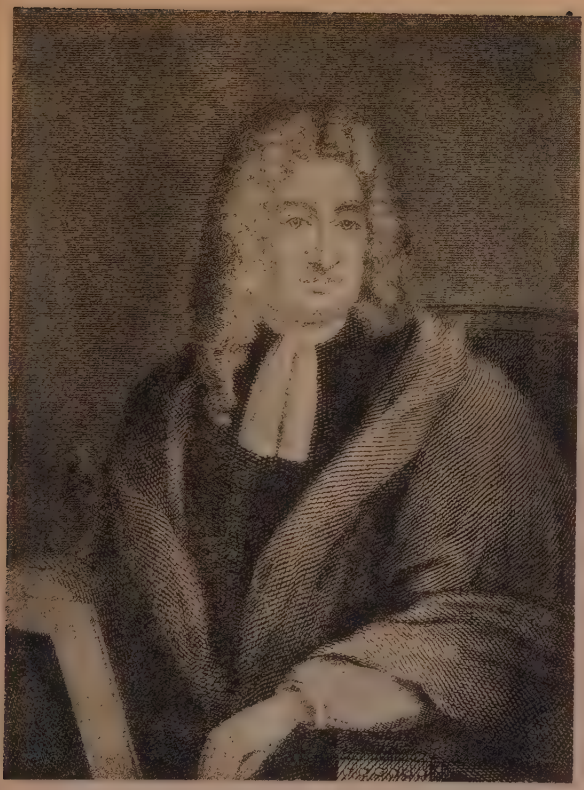
tion, and it is very modern in spirit, in spite of its old-fashioned style.

Through its pages you get a very strong impression of old Dr. Johnson. You laugh at the man's gross superstitions, at his vanity, his greediness at table, his absurd judgments of many of his contemporaries, his abuse of pensioners and his own quick acceptance of a pension. At all these foibles and weaknesses you smile, yet underneath them was a genuine man, like Milton, full of simplicity, honesty, reverence and humility—a man greater than any literary work that he produced or spoken word that he left behind him. You laugh at his groanings, his gluttony, his capacity for unlimited cups of hot tea; but you recall with tears in your eyes his pathetic prayers, his kindness to the old and crippled pensioners whom he fed and clothed, and his pilgrimage to Uttoxeter to stand bareheaded in the street, as penance for harsh words spoken to his father in a fit of boyish petulance years before.

Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels

Masterpieces of Defoe and Swift Widely Read—Two Writers of Genius Whose Stories Have Delighted Readers for Hundreds of Years.

Two famous books that seem to follow naturally after *Pilgrim's Progress* are Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Not to be familiar with these two English masterpieces is to miss allusions which occur in everyday reading even of newspapers and magazines. Probably not one American boy in one thousand is ignorant of *Robinson Crusoe*. It is the greatest book of adventure for boys that has ever been written, because it relates the novel and exciting experiences of a castaway sailor on a solitary island in a style so simple that a child of six is able to understand it. Yet the mature reader who takes



Portrait of Daniel Defoe
from an Old Steel Engraving — Defoe's
Genius for Secrecy Effectually Destroyed
Most Material for His Biography
and even this Portrait is
not Authentic

up *Robinson Crusoe* will find it full of charm, because he can see the art of the novelist, revealed in that passion for minute detail to which we have come to give the name of realism, and that spiritual quality which makes the reader a sharer in the fears, the loneliness and the simple faith of the sailor who lived alone for so many years on Juan Fernandez Island.

In all English literature there is nothing finer than the descriptions of Robinson Crusoe's solitary life, his delight in his pets, and his care and training of Friday. Swift's work, on the other hand, is not for children, although young readers may enjoy the ludicrous features of Gulliver's adventures. Back of these is the bitter satire on all human traits which no one can appreciate who has not had hard experience in the ways of the world. These two books are the masterpieces of their authors, but if any one has time to read others of their works he will be repaid, for both made noteworthy contributions to the literature that endures.

Daniel Defoe, the son of a butcher, was born in 1661 and died in 1731. Much of his career is still a puzzle to literary students because of his extraordinary passion for

secrecy. He gained no literary fame until after fifty years of age, although he had written many pamphlets and had conducted a review which gave to Addison the idea of *The Spectator*. Defoe engaged in mercantile business and failed. He also wrote much for the Government, his pungent and persuasive style fitting him for the career of a pamphleteer. But his independence and his lack of tact caused him to lose credit at court and he fell back upon literature. He may be called the first of the newspaper reporters, before the day of the daily newspaper, and he first saw the advantage of the interview. No one has ever surpassed him in the power of making an imaginary narrative seem real and genuine by minute detail artfully introduced.

The English-reading public was captured by *Robinson Crusoe*. Four editions were called for in four months, and Defoe met the demand for more stories from his pen by issuing in the following year *Duncan Campbell*, *Captain Singleton* and *Memoirs of a Cavalier*. It is evident that Defoe had written these works in previous years and had not been encouraged to print them. Readers of today seldom look into these books, but the *Memoirs* are noteworthy for

ILLUSTRATION OF "ROBINSON CRUSOE" BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK WHICH SERVES AS A FRONTISPIECE TO MAJOR'S EDITION OF DEFOE'S ROMANCE, 1831

splendid descriptions of fights between Roundheads and Cavaliers, and *Captain Singleton* contains a memorable narrative of an expedition across Africa, then an unknown land, which anticipated many of the discoveries of Mungo Park, Bruce, Speke and Stanley.

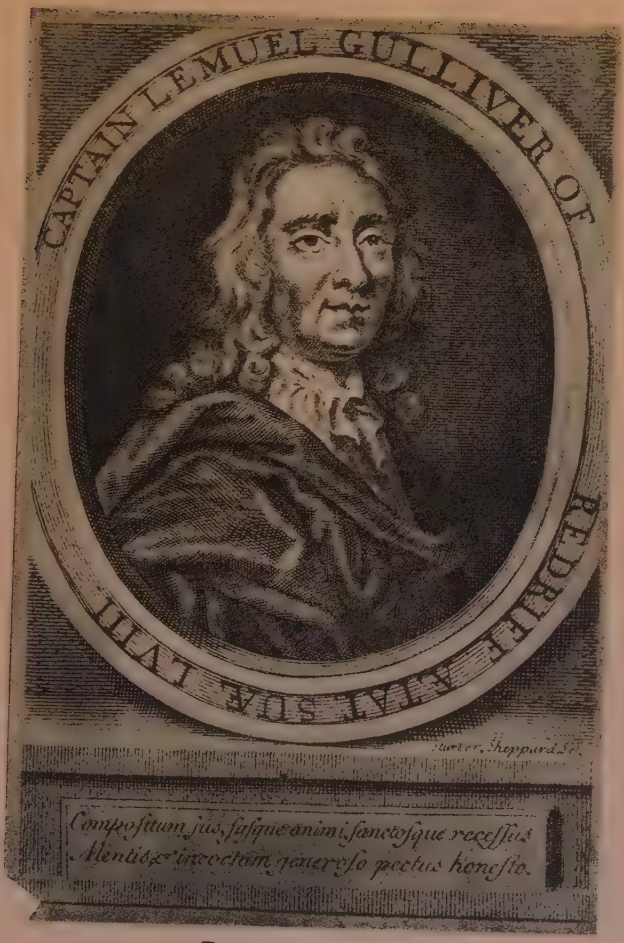
Defoe's other works are *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, *Roxana*, and *Journal of the Plague Year*. Years ago I read all the novels of Defoe, taking them up at night after work hours. They are not to be commended as books that will induce sleep, because they are far too entertaining. Defoe's story of the great plague in London is far more striking than the records of those who actually lived through the terrible months when a great city was converted into a huge charnel-house by the pestilence that walketh by noonday. Pepys in his *Diary* has many passages on the plague, but these do not appeal to one as Defoe's story does, probably because Pepys did not have the literary faculty.

The three other stories all deal with life in the underworld of London. Defoe in Moll Flanders and Roxana depicts two types of the courtesan and, despite several coarse scenes, the narratives of the lives of

these women are singularly entertaining. The only dull spots are those in which he indulges in his habit of drawing pious morals from the vices of his characters. From these stories one may get a better idea of the London of the early part of the eighteenth century than from books which were specially written to describe the customs and manners of the time, because Defoe regarded nothing as too trivial to set down in his descriptions.

Defoe wrote his masterpiece from materials furnished by a sailor, Alexander Selkirk, who returned to London after spending many years of solitude on the Island of Juan Fernandez. The records of the time give a brief outline of his adventures, and there is no question that Defoe interviewed this man and received from his lips the suggestion of his immortal story. But everything that has made the book a classic for three hundred years was furnished by Defoe himself.

The life of the story lies in the artfully written details of the daily life of the sailor from the time when he was cast ashore on the desolate island. Even the mature reader takes a keen interest in the salvage by Crusoe of the many articles which are



FRONTISPIECE TO THE
FIRST EDITION OF "GULLIVER'S TRAVELS"
A PORTRAIT ENGRAVED IN COPPER OF
CAPTAIN LEMUEL GULLIVER
OF REDRIFF

to prove of the greatest value to him, while to any healthy child this is one of the most absorbing stories of adventure ever written. The child cannot appreciate Crusoe's mental and moral attitude, but the mature reader sees between the lines of the solitary sailor's reflections the lessons which Defoe learned in those hard years when everything he touched ended in failure.

Jonathan Swift may be bracketed with Defoe, because he was born in 1667 and died in 1745, only fourteen years after death claimed the author of *Robinson Crusoe*. As Defoe is known mainly by his story of the island castaway, so Swift is known by his bitter satire, *Gulliver's Travels*, although he was a prolific writer of political pamphlets. Swift is usually regarded as an Irishman, but he was of English stock, although by chance he happened to be born in Ireland. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and he had the great advantage of several years' residence at the country seat of Sir William Temple, one of the most accomplished men of his time.

There he was associated with Esther Johnson, a poor relation of Temple's who later became the Stella who inspired his

journal. Swift, through the influence of Temple, hoped to get political preferment, but though he wrote many pamphlets and a strong satire in prose, *The Tale of a Tub*, his hopes of office were disappointed. Finally he obtained a living at Laracor, in Meath, and there he preached several years, making frequent visits to London and Dublin.

Like Defoe, Swift wrote English that was modern in its simplicity and directness. He never indulged in florid metaphor or concealed his thought under verbiage. Everything was clear, direct, incisive. While Defoe accepted failure frankly and remained untinged with bitterness, Swift seemed to store up venom after every defeat and every humiliation, and this poison he injected into his writings.

Although a priest of the church, he divided his attentions for years between Stella, the woman he first met at Sir William Temple's, and Vanessa, a young woman of Dublin. He was reported to have secretly married Stella in 1716, but there is no record of the marriage. Seven years later he broke off all relations with Vanessa because she wrote to Stella asking her if she were married to Swift, and this rupture

TRAVELS

INTO SEVERAL

Remote NATIONS

OF THE

WORLD.

In FOUR PARTS.

By *LEMUEL GULLIVER*,
First a SURGEON, and then a CAPTAIN of several SHIPS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for BENJ. MOTTE, *at the Middle* Temple-Gate *in* Fleet-ſtreet.
MDCCXXVI.

FACSIMILE OF THE TITLE PAGE
OF THE FIRST EDITION OF "GULLIVER'S TRAVELS"
ISSUED IN 1726, WHICH SCORED AS GREAT
A POPULAR SUCCESS AS DEFOE'S
"ROBINSON CRUSOE"

brought on the woman's death. Stella's death followed soon after, and the closing years of Swift were clouded with remorse and fear of insanity.

In *Gulliver's Travels* Swift wrote several stories of the adventures of an Englishman who was cast away on the shores of Lilliput, a country whose people were only six inches tall; then upon Brobdingnag, a land inhabited by giants sixty feet high; then upon Laputa, a flying island, and finally upon the land of the Houyhnhnms, where the horse rules and man is represented by a degenerate creature known as a Yahoo, who serves the horse as a slave. In the first two stories Gulliver's satire is amusing, but the picture of the old people in Laputa who cannot die and of the Yahoos, who have every detestable vice, are so bitter that they repel any except morbid readers. Yet the style never lacks clearness, simplicity and force, and one feels in reading these tales that he is listening to the voice of a master of the English tongue.

Bibliography

Notes on the Historical and Best Reading Editions of Great Authors.

In this bibliography no attempt has been made to give complete guides to the various books. In fact, to give the Bible alone its due would require all the space that is allotted here to the thirteen great books discussed in this volume. All that has been attempted is to furnish the reader lists of the historical editions that are noteworthy, with others which are best adapted for use, as well as any commentaries that are especially helpful to the reader who has small leisure.

In securing cheap editions of good books the reader of today has a decided advantage over the reader of five years ago, for in these years have appeared two well-edited libraries of general literature that not only furnish accurate texts, well printed and substantially bound, but furnish these at merely nominal prices. The first is Everyman's Library, issued in this country by E. P. Dutton & Company

of New York. It comprises the best works from all departments of literature selected by a committee of English scholars, headed by Ernest Rhys, the editor of the Library. Associated with him were Lord Avebury, George Saintsbury, Sir Oliver Lodge, Andrew Lang, Stopford Brooke, Hilaire Belloc, Gilbert K. Chesterton, A. C. Swinburne and Dr. Richard Garnett. The result is a collection of good literature, each volume prefaced with a short but scholarly introduction. The price is 35 cents in cloth and 70 cents in leather.

The other series is known as the People's Library, and is issued by the Cassell Company of London and New York. This Library is sold at the remarkably low price of 25 cents a volume, well printed and fairly bound in cloth.

THE BIBLE

The Bible is the one "best seller" throughout the world. Last year Bible societies printed and circulated 11,378,854 Bibles. The Bible is now printed in four hundred languages. Last year the British and Foreign Bible Society printed 6,620,024 copies, or an increase of 685,000 copies over the previous year. Even China last year bought 428,000 Bibles.

The first English translation of the Bible which had a great vogue was what is known as the Authorized Version issued in the reign of King James I. For centuries after the Christian Era the Bible appeared only

in the Latin Version, called the Vulgate. As early as the seventh century English churchmen made translations of the Psalter, and the Venerable Bede made an Anglo-Saxon version of St. John's gospel. Toward the close of the fourteenth century appeared Wyclif's Bible, which gained such general circulation that there are still extant no less than one hundred and fifty manuscript copies of this version.

Then came Tyndale, whose ambition was to make a translation that any one could understand. He said: "If God spare me life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than you priests do." His version of a few books of the Bible was published first at Cologne, but its acceptance in England was greatly hindered by the translator's polemical notes. Tyndale was burned at the stake in Belgium for the crime of having translated the Bible into the speech of the common people. He will always be remembered as the pioneer who prepared the way for the Authorized Version.

After Tyndale came Rogers, who carried on his work as far as Isaiah. He was followed by Coverdale who wrote fine sonorous English prose, but was weak in scholarship. His translation was superseded by the Geneva Version, made in 1568 by English refugees in the Swiss city. The Geneva translation is noteworthy as the first to appear in Roman type, all the others being in black letter.

The King James Bible was first proposed at the Hampden Conference in 1604. The Bishops opposed the scheme, but the King was greatly taken with it, and in his usual arbitrary way he appointed himself director of the work and issued instructions to the fifty-four scholars chosen. One-third of these were from

Oxford, one-third from Cambridge and the remainder from Westminster. They worked three years at the task and produced what is known as the Authorized Version. There seems to be a strong prejudice against King James because of his eccentricities, and most writers on the Bible declare that this version was never authorized by King, Privy Council, Convocation or Parliament. This is wrong, for King James authorized the book, and it owed its existence directly to him. Anglicans and Puritans in this famous Conference were bitterly hostile to each other, and if they had had their way we should never have had this fine version of the Bible. The King was president of the Conference, but the two factions were ready to fly at each other's throats over such questions as the baptism of infants, the authority of the Bishop of Rome and others. The King, however, brushed all these questions aside. He said that the Geneva Bible taught sedition and disobedience, and by royal mandate he ordered Bishop Reynolds and his associates to make the best version in their power. So the credit which the King received by having his name joined to the Bible was well deserved.

The King James Bible or the Authorized Version has had greater influence on the style of English authors than any other work, and it remains today a model of the simplest and best English, with few obsolete words. Out of the small number of 6,000 words used in the Bible, as against 25,000 in Shakespeare, not more than 250 words are now out of every-day use.

The best short essay on the Authorized Version is by Albert S. Cook, Professor of the English Language and Literature in Yale University (N. Y., G. P. Putnam's, 1910). This was originally contributed to the Cambridge History of English Literature, but in book

form it contains some matter not printed in the History. Professor Cook shows that the King James Bible today contains fewer obsolete or archaic words than Shakespeare, and that this version put into the speech of the common people a score of phrases that now are scarcely thought of as purely Biblical, so completely have they passed into every-day speech. Among these are "highways and hedges," "clear as crystal," "hip and thigh," "arose as one man," "lick the dust," "a thorn in the flesh," "a broken reed," "root of all evil," "sweat of his brow," "heap coals of fire," "a law unto themselves," "the fat of the land," "a soft answer," "a word in season," "weighed in the balance and found wanting," and so forth.

Between the Authorized Version and the New Revised Version a number of individual translations appeared. The Long Parliament made an order in 1653 for a new translation of the Bible, and three years later a committee was appointed, but as Parliament was dissolved shortly after, the project fell through. The individual versions for a hundred years are not noteworthy, but in 1851 the American Bible Society issued a "Standard" Bible which it circulated for five years. It was simply the King James Bible free from errors and discrepancies. Another important revision was made by the American Bible Union in 1860 and a second revision followed in 1866. Its salient feature was the adoption of the paragraph form.

In 1870 a new revised version of the Bible, which should receive the benefit of the labors of modern scholars, was decided on. The Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury appointed a committee to report on revision. A joint committee from both houses a few months later was elected and was empowered to begin

the work. Two committees were established, one for the Old and one for the New Testament. Work was begun June 22, 1870, but in July it was decided to ask the coöperation of American divines. An American Committee of thirty members was organized, and began work October 4, 1872. The English Committees sent their revision to the American Committee, which returned it with suggestions and emendations. Five revisions were made in this way before the work was completed. Special care was taken in the translation of the Greek text of the New Testament.

In 1881 the Revised New Testament appeared. Orders for three million copies came from all parts of the English-speaking world. The Revised Old Testament appeared in 1885. The preferences of the American Committee were placed in a special appendix in both books. In 1901 the American Committee issued the American Standard Revised Version, which is in general circulation in this country.

The tercentenary of the King James Version was celebrated in March, 1911, and it brought out many interesting facts in regard to the book that has been one of the chief educational forces in England and in all English-speaking countries since it was issued.

Among the famous Bibles are the Gutenberg Bible, which was the first to be printed from movable types; the "Vinegar" Bible, because of the printer's misprint of vinegar for vineyard; the "Treacle" Bible, which owed its name to the phrase "treacle in Gilead" for "balm in Gilead"; the "Wicked" Bible, so called because the printers omitted the "not" in the Seventh Commandment.

Of famous manuscript Bibles may be named the Codex Alexandrinus, presented by the Sultan of Turkey

to Charles II of England, and the Codex Sinaiticus, discovered in a monastery on Mount Sinai by the great Hebrew scholar, Tischendorf.

Dr. Grenfell, who has made an international reputation by his work among the fishermen of Labrador and by his books on the Bible, suggests that the Scriptures should not be brought out with any distinctive binding. He believes the Bible would gain many more readers if it were bound like an ordinary secular book, so that one could read it on trains or boats without exciting comment. His suggestion is a good one and it is to be hoped it will be acted on by Bible publishers. Anything that will help to make people read the Bible regularly deserves encouragement.

One of the best Bibles for ordinary use is *The Modern Reader's Bible*, edited with introduction and notes by Richard G. Moulton, Professor of Literary Theory and Interpretation in the University of Chicago. The editor has abolished the paragraph form and he has printed all the poetry in verse form, which is a great convenience to the reader. It makes a volume of 1733 pages, printed on thin but opaque paper. (New York: The Macmillan Company. Price, $2.00 net.)

The Soul of the Bible (Boston: American Unitarian Association) is the very best condensation of the Scriptures. It is arranged by Ulysses G. B. Pierce and consists of selections from the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha. The editor has brought together parts of the Bible which explain and supplement each other. The result is that in five hundred and twenty pages one gets the very soul of the Bible. Nothing could be better than this book as an introduction to the careful reading and systematic study of the Bible, which

is the best means of culture of spirit and mind that the world affords.

SHAKESPEARE

The first folio edition of Shakespeare was published by J. Heminge and H. Condell in 1623. A copy of the first folio is now very valuable. A reprint of the first folio was issued in 1807 in folio. The first photo-lithographic reproduction was brought out in 1866. The first folio text is now being brought out, with a volume to each play, by the T. Y. Crowell Company of New York.

Four folio editions were brought out in all, the last in 1685.

Of the famous editions may be mentioned Rowe's, the first octavo, in 1709; Alexander Pope's in 1723; Theobald's in 1733; Warburton's in 1747; Dr. Johnson's in 1765; Malone's, the first variorum, in ten volumes, in 1790. The first American edition was issued at Philadelphia in 1795. Among modern editions may be mentioned Boydell's illustrated edition in 1802; Charles Knight's popular pictorial edition in eight volumes in 1838; Halliwell's edition in sixteen volumes from 1853 to 1865; Dyce's edition in 1857; Richard Grant White's edition in twelve volumes, published in Boston (1857–1860).

The most noteworthy edition issued in this country is Dr. H. H. Furness' variorum edition, begun in Philadelphia in 1873 and still continued by Dr. Furness' son. A volume is devoted to each play and the various texts as well as the notes and critical summaries make this the ideal edition for the scholar. The Cambridge Edition, edited by W. Aldis Wright in nine octavo volumes, is the standard modern text. This text is also

given in the Temple Edition, so popular with present-day readers, issued in forty handy sized volumes with prefaces and glossaries by Israel Gollancz. The expurgated text edited by W. J. Rolfe has been used generally in schools, as also the Hudson Shakespeare, edited by Rev. H. N. Hudson.

The best concordance for many years was that of Mary Cowden Clarke, first issued in 1844. The concordance by John Bartlett was published more recently.

The best biography of Shakespeare is by Sydney Lee, in a single volume, *A Life of Shakespeare*. (New York: The Macmillan Company.)

Other interesting books that deal with the playwright and his plays are *Shakespeare's London*, by H. T. Stephenson; *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist*, by George Pierce Baker; *Shakespeare*, by E. Dowden; *Shakespeare Manual*, by F. L. Fleay; *The Text of Shakespeare*, by Thomas R. Lounsbury; *Shakespearean Tragedy*, by A. C. Bradley, and *An Introduction to Shakespeare*, by H. N. McCracken, F. E. Pierce and W. H. Durham, of the Department of English Literature in the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University. This is the most valuable book for a beginner in the study of Shakespeare.

A valuable book for the reader who cannot grasp readily the story of a Shakespeare play is *Stories of Shakespeare's Comedies*, by H. A. Guerber. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1910.) The best book for the plots is Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*.

If you are interested in the subject look up these books in any good library and then decide on the volumes you wish to buy. Never buy a book without looking it over, unless you wish to court disappointment.

The Shakespeare-Bacon controversy was first touched upon by J. C. Hart in *The Romance of Yachting*, issued in New York in 1848. Seven years later W. H. Smith came out with a work, *Was Bacon the Author of Shakespeare's Plays?* In 1857 Delia Bacon wrote the *Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*. She created a great furore for a time in England but interest soon declined. In recent years the principal defender of the theory that Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare was Ignatius Donnelly of Minneapolis, who wrote two huge books in which he developed at tedious length what he claimed was a cipher or cryptogram that he had found in Shakespeare's plays, but he died before he cleared up the mystery or gave any adequate proofs.

GREEK AND ROMAN CLASSICS

The versions of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are numerous but most readers who do not know Greek prefer the prose rendering of the *Iliad* by Lang, Leaf and Myers and the prose version of the *Odyssey* by Butcher and Lang. In language that is almost Biblical in its force and simplicity these scholars give far more of the spirit of the original Greek than any of the translators in verse. Chapman's Homer is known today only through the noble sonnet by Keats. It has fine passages but it is unreadable. Cowper's Homer in blank verse is also intolerably dull. The best blank verse translations are by Lord Derby, William Cullen Bryant and Christopher P. Cranch.

For supplementary reading on Homer these works will be found valuable: Jebb, *Introduction to Homer* (Glasgow, 1887); Matthew Arnold, *Lectures on Translating Homer;* Andrew Lang, *Homer and the*

Epic (London, 1893); Seymour, *Introduction to the Language and Verse of Homer* (Boston, 1889); Professor J. P. Mahaffy's books on ancient Greece and Greek life will be found helpful.

Virgil's *Æneid* has been translated by many hands. Dryden produced a fair version and William Morris, Cranch, Conington and others have written excellent translations. Conington furnished a good translation in prose.

Jowett's translation is the standard English version of Plato, while good sidelights on the author of the *Republic* and *Phædo* may be gained from Emerson's essay on Plato in *Representative Men* and from Walter Pater's *Plato and Platonism*.

Professor A. J. Church's *The Story of the Iliad* and *The Story of the Æneid* while intended for the young will appeal to many mature readers.

No translation of Horace has ever been perfectly satisfactory. The quality of the poet seems to elude translation. Some of the most successful versions are Conington, *Odes and Epodes* (London, 1865); Lord Lytton, *Odes and Epodes* (London, 1869), and Sargent, *Odes* (Boston, 1893); supplementary matter may be found in Sellar's *Horace and the Elegiac Poets* (Oxford, 1892).

Short sketches and critical estimates of all the great Greek and Latin writers may be found in *The New International Encyclopedia* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1904). These are written mainly by Harry Thurston Peck, for many years Professor of Latin in Columbia University and conceded to be one of the best Latin scholars in this country. They give all the facts that the general reader cares to know with an excellent bibliography of each writer.

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

The exact title is *The Book of the Thousand and One Nights*. It contains two hundred and sixty-two tales, although the original edition omits one of the most famous, the story of *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*. Antoine Galland was the first translator into a European language. His French version was issued in 1717, in twelve volumes. Sir Richard Burton, who translated an unexpurgated edition of *The Arabian Nights*, with many notes and an essay on the sources of the tales, ascribed the fairy tales to Persian sources. Burton's edition gives all the obscene allusions but he treated the erotic element in the tales from the scholarly standpoint, holding that this feature showed the Oriental view of such matters, which was and is radically different from the Occidental attitude.

Burton's work was issued by subscription in 1885–1886 in ten volumes and is a monument to his Oriental scholarship. Burton left at his death the manuscript of another celebrated Oriental work, *The Scented Garden*, but Lady Burton, who was made his executrix, although offered £25,000 for the copyright, destroyed the manuscript. She declared that she did this to protect her husband's name, as the world would look upon his notes as betraying undue fondness for the erotic, whereas she knew and his close friends knew that this interest was purely scholarly. Scholars all over the world mourned over this destruction of Burton's work.

Another noteworthy unexpurgated translation was by John Payne, prepared for the Villon Society, and issued in 1882–1884.

The best English translation is by E. W. Lane, an English Orientalist, whose notes are valuable. The editions of *The Arabian Nights* are endless, and many

famous artists have given the world their conception of the principal characters in these Arabian wonder stories.

THE NIBELUNGENLIED

The Nibelungenlied is the German Iliad and dates from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. No less than twenty-eight manuscripts of this great epic have come down through the ages. From the time of the Reformation down to the middle of the eighteenth century it seemed to be forgotten. Then a Swiss writer, Bodmer, issued parts of it in connection with a version of the *Klage*, a poem describing the mourning at King Etzel's Court over the famous heroes who fell to satisfy the vengeance of Kriemhild.

The real discoverer, who restored the epic to the world, was Dr. J. H. Oberiet, who found a later version of the poem in the Castle of Hohenems in the Tyrol, June 29, 1755.

C. H. Myller in 1782 published the first complete edition, using part of Bodmer's version. It was not until the opening of the nineteenth century and during the Romantic movement in Germany that *The Nibelungenlied* was seriously studied. Partsch, a German critic, developed the theory that *The Nibelungenlied* was written about 1140 and that rhyme was introduced by a later poet to take the place of the stronger assonances in the original version.

The legend of Siegfried's death, resulting from the quarrel of the two queens, and all the woes that followed, was the common property of all the German and Scandinavian people. From the banks of the Rhine to the northernmost parts of Norway and Sweden and the Shetland Isles and Iceland this legend of chivalry and revenge was sung around the camp-fires. William

Morris' *Sigurd the Volsung* is derived from a prose paraphrase of the Edda songs.

Many English versions of *The Nibelungenlied* have been made but most of them are harsh. Carlyle's summary of the epic in his *Miscellanies* is the most satisfactory for the general reader. A good prose version of *The Nibelungenlied* is by Daniel Bussier Shumway, Professor of German Philology in the University of Pennsylvania. It contains an admirable essay on the history of the epic. (Boston, 1909.)

William Morris has made fine renderings in verse of portions of *The Nibelungenlied* but he has drawn much of his material from the kindred Norse legends. Two translations into English verse are those of W. N. Lettson, *The Fall of the Nibelungen* (London, 1874), and of Alice Harnton, *The Lay of the Nibelungs* (London, 1898).

A complete bibliography of works in English dealing with *The Nibelungenlied* may be found in F. E. Sandbach's *The Nibelungenlied and Gudrun in England and America* (London, 1904).

Other books dealing with *The Nibelungenlied* are F. H. Hedge, *Hours With the German Classics* (Boston, 1886); G. T. Dippold, *The Great Epics of Mediæval Germany* (Boston, 1882); G. H. Genung, *The Nibelungenlied* in Warner's *Library of the World's Best Literature*, Volume xviii (New York, 1897).

THE CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUGUSTINE

The first translation of the *Confessions* to gain general circulation was in Dr. Pusey's *Library of the Fathers* (Oxford, 1839–1855). Pusey admits his edition is merely a version of W. Watts' version, ori-

ginally printed in London in 1650, but Pusey added many notes as well as a long preface. An American edition was issued by Dr. W. G. T. Shedd of Andover, Mass., in 1860; it consisted of this same translation by Watts with a comparison by Shedd between *Augustine's Confessions* and those of Rousseau.

An elaborate article on St. Augustine, dealing with his life, his theological work and his influence on the Church, may be found in the second volume of *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1907). It is written by Eugene Portalie, S. J., Professor of Theology at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse, France.

CERVANTES' "DON QUIXOTE"

Don Quixote first appeared in Madrid in 1605 and the second part in 1615. Other noteworthy Spanish editions were by Pellicier (Madrid, 1797–1798) and by Diego Clemencia (Madrid, 1833–1839). The first English version of the great Spanish classic appeared in London in 1612. The translator was T. Skelton. Other later English editions were J. Philips, 1687; P. Motteux, 1700–1712; C. Jarvis, 1742; Tobias Smollett, 1755; A. J. Duffield, 1881; H. E. Watts, 1888, 1894. Watts' edition contains a full biography.

A noteworthy edition of Cervantes is the English version by Daniel Vierge in four volumes, with many fine illustrations, which give the reader a series of sketches of Spanish life as it is depicted in the pages of *Don Quixote*. Vierge's edition is the most satisfactory that has ever been issued. It is brought out in beautiful style by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

A standard *Life of Cervantes* is that by T. Roscoe, London, 1839. H. E. Watts has written a fine mono-

graph in Great Writers' Series, 1891. Other lives are by J. F. Kelly, 1892, and A. F. Calvert, 1905. Lockhart's introduction is printed in the Everyman edition of *Don Quixote*, the translation by Motteux. This introduction makes thirty pages and gives enough facts for the general reader, with a good estimate of *Don Quixote* and Cervantes' other works.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

The early editions of Thomas à Kempis' great work were in manuscript, many of them beautifully illuminated. A noteworthy edition was brought out in 1600 at Antwerp by Henry Sommalius, S. J. The works of Thomas à Kempis in three volumes were issued by this same editor in 1615.

The first English version of the *Imitation* was made by Willyam Atkynson and was printed by Wykyns de Worde in 1502. In 1567 Edward Hake issued a fine edition. Among the best English editions are those of Canon Benham, Sir Francis Cruise, Bishop Challoner and the Oxford edition of 1841. The best edition for the beginner is that edited by Brother Leo, F. S. C., Professor of English Literature in St. Mary's College, Oakland, California. It is in the Macmillan's Pocket Classics and has an admirable introduction of fifty-three pages. The notes are brief but very helpful.

Some of the best articles on Thomas à Kempis are to be found in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* and *The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Thought*.

There has been much controversy over the authorship of *The Imitation of Christ*, but the weight of evidence is conclusive that Thomas à Kempis was the writer of this book, which has preserved his name for five hundred years. The book was issued anonymously

and some manuscript copies of it bore the name of St. Bernard and others that of John Gerson. As Thomas à Kempis spent most of his life copying sacred books it was assumed that he had merely copied the text of another monk's work.

A Spanish student in 1604 found a sentence from the *Imitation* quoted in a sermon attributed to Bonaventura, who died in 1273, two hundred years before the death of Thomas. This caused a great literary sensation and it was some time before it was established that the sermon was not by Bonaventura but belonged to the fifteenth century. In casting about for the real author of the *Imitation* the Superior of the Jesuit College at Arona, Father Rossignoli, found an undated copy of the *Imitation* in the college library with the signature of Johannis Gerson. The college had been formerly conducted by the Benedictines, so it was assumed that Gerson was the real author. It was only after much research that it was proved that this manuscript copy of the *Imitation* was brought to Arona from Genoa in 1579. Constantine Cajetan, a fanatic in his devotion to the order of St. Benedict, found in a copy of the *Imitation* printed in Venice in 1501 a note saying, "this book was not written by John Gerson but by John, Abbot of Vercelli." A manuscript copy was also found by him bearing the name of John of Carabuco. Out of these facts Cajetan built up his theory that John Gerson of Carabuco, Benedictine Abbot of Vercelli, was the real author of the *Imitation*.

Thus began the most famous controversy in the annals of literature, which raged for several hundred years. Among the claimants to the honor of having written this book were Bernard of Clairvaux, Giovanni Gerso, an Italian monk of the twelfth century; Walter

Hilton, an English monk; John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris; John Gerson, Abbot of Vercelli, and Thomas à Kempis.

What would seem to be conclusive evidence that Thomas à Kempis was the author is the fact that the *Imitation* was written for chanting. Carl Hirsche compared the manuscript copy of the *Imitation* of 1441 which he found in the Bourgogne Library in Brussels with other writings of Thomas à Kempis, also marked for chanting, and found great similarity between the *Imitation* and the works admitted to have been written by Thomas à Kempis.

The *Imitation* has been a favorite book with many persons. Mrs. Jane L. Stanford, who showed such remarkable faith in the university which Leland Stanford founded and who made many sacrifices to save it in critical periods, always carried a fine copy of Thomas à Kempis with her. Miss Berger, who was Mrs. Stanford's secretary and constant companion for over fifteen years, told me that whenever Mrs. Stanford was in doubt or trouble she took up the *Imitation*, opened it at random and always found something which settled her doubts and gave her comfort.

THE RUBÁ'IYÁT

Edward FitzGerald's version of the *Rubá'iyát* was the first to appeal to the western world. It has been reproduced in countless editions since it was first issued in London in 1859. Dole in the *Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyám* (Boston, 1896) gives a fairly complete bibliography of manuscripts, editions, translations and imitations of the Quatrains.

Five hundred quatrains from the original Persian, translated metrically by E. H. Whinfield, were issued

in London, 1883, while Payne made a poetical translation, reproducing all the metrical eccentricities of the original Persian, which he called "*The Quatrains of Omar Khayyám*, now first completely done into English Verse from the Persian, with a Biographical and Critical Introduction" (London, 1898). Heron Allen has added a valuable book in *The Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyám:* A Facsimile of the Manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Translated and Edited (Boston, 1898).

One of the best editions of the *Rubá'iyát* is a reprint of FitzGerald's various editions, showing the many changes, some of which were not improvements, and the quatrains that were dropped out of the final version, with a commentary by Batson and an introduction by Ross (New York, 1900).

Another excellent edition of FitzGerald's final version, issued by Paul Elder & Company, is edited by Arthur Guiterman and contains *The Literal Omar*, that lovers of the astronomer-poet may see, stanza for stanza, how the old Persian originally phrased the verses that the Irish recluse so musically echoed in English.

DANTE'S "DIVINE COMEDY"

The best known English translation of the *Divine Comedy* is that of Cary, first published in 1806. Other English versions are by Dayman, Pollock and J. A. Carlyle. Longfellow made a translation in verse which is musical and cast in the *terza rima* of the original.

A mass of commentary on Dante has been issued of which only a few noteworthy books can be mentioned here. Among these are Botta, *Introduction to the Study of Dante* (London, 1887); Maria Francesca Ros-

setti, *A Shadow of Dante* (London, 1884); Butler, *Dante: His Times and His Work* (London, 1895); Symonds, *Introduction to the Study of Dante* (Edinburgh, 1890); Lowell, *Among My Books*, one of the finest essays on the great poet and his work (Boston, 1880); Macaulay, *Essays*, Vol. 1; Carlyle in *Heroes and Hero Worship*.

One of the largest Dante libraries in the world was collected by the late Professor Willard Fiske of Cornell University. At his death this splendid library was given to the university which Professor Fiske served for over twenty years as head of the department of Northern European languages. Professor Melville B. Anderson, recently retired from the chair of English Literature at Stanford University, is now completing a translation of Dante, which has been a labor of love for many years.

MILTON'S "PARADISE LOST," AND OTHER POEMS

The first edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in ten books, bears date of August 10, 1667. Seven years later, with many changes and enlarged by two books, it appeared in a second edition. All that Milton received for this poem was £10. *Paradise Regained* was first printed with *Samson Agonistes* in 1671.

The standard biography of Milton is by Masson in six volumes (London, 1859–1894). The best short sketch is Mark Pattison's in John Morley's *English Men of Letters Series* (New York, 1880). Another good short sketch is in Richard Garnett's volume in *Great Writers' Series* (London, 1890).

One of the best editions of Milton's *Prose Works* is in the Bohn Library, five volumes, edited by St. John.

The *Poetical Works*, edited by Masson, appeared in 1890 in three volumes. Buching of Oxford issued in 1900 reprints of the first editions under the title, *Poetical Works After the Original Texts.*

Among famous essays on Milton may be named those by Dr. Johnson, Macaulay, Lowell and Trent. Dr. Hiram Corson's *Introduction to Milton's Works* will be found valuable, as will also Osgood's *The Classical Mythology of Milton's English Poems.* In Hale's *Longer English Poems* there are chapters on Milton which are full of good suggestions.

BUNYAN'S "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS"

The *Pilgrim's Progress*, which has been translated into seventy-one languages and has passed through more editions than any other book except the Bible, originally appeared in 1678, a second edition came out in the same year and a third edition in 1679. Bunyan made numerous additions to the second and third editions. The second part of *Pilgrim's Progress* appeared in 1684.

Bunyan's literary activity was phenomenal when it is remembered that he had little early education. In all he produced sixty books and pamphlets, all devoted to spreading the faith to which he devoted his life. Among the best known of his works besides *Pilgrim's Progress* is *The Holy War, The Holy City, Grace Abounding in the Chief of Sinners, The Life and Death of Mr. Badman.*

The best short life of Bunyan is that by James Anthony Froude in *English Men of Letters Series* (New York, 1880). Macaulay's essay on Bunyan ranks with his noble essay on Milton. Other lives are those by Southey, Dr. J. Brown and Canon Venables.

BOSWELL'S JOHNSON

The first edition of *Boswell's Johnson* appeared in 1791 and made a great hit. There was a call for a second edition in 1794 and Boswell was preparing a third edition in 1795 when he died. This uncompleted third edition was issued by Edward Malone in 1799, who also superintended the issue of the fourth, fifth and sixth editions. Malone furnished many notes and he also received the assistance of Dr. Charles Burney, father of the author of *Evelina*, and others who knew both Boswell and Johnson. An edition in 1822 was issued by the Chalmers, who contributed much information of value. All these materials with much new matter went into the edition of John Wilson Croker in 1831. Croker was cordially hated by Macaulay and the result was the bitter criticism of Croker's edition of Boswell's great work that is now included among the famous essays of Macaulay. Bohn brought out Croker's edition in ten volumes in 1859, and it has been reproduced in this country by the John W. Lovell Company in four volumes. Carlyle's *Essay on Boswell's Johnson* is one of the best pen pictures of the old Doctor and his biographer that has ever been written.

Percy Fitzgerald's *Life of Boswell* (London, 1891) is good and Rogers' *Boswelliana* gives many anecdotes of the writer of the best biography in the language. *Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale*, by A. M. Broadley, furnishes much curious information about the relations of the old Doctor with the woman who studied his comfort for so many years. It is rich in illustrations from rare portraits and old prints and in reproductions of letters (New York: John Lane Company, 1909).

ROBINSON CRUSOE

The first edition of *Robinson Crusoe* appeared in 1719. It made an immediate hit and was quickly translated into many languages. A second part was added but this was never so popular as the first. The first publication was in serial form in a periodical, *The Original London Post* or *Heathcote's Intelligencer*. So great was its success that four editions were called for in the same year, three in two volumes and one, a condensed version, in a single volume.

In 1720 Defoe brought out *Serious Reflections During the Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, with His Vision of the Angelic World*. This was poorly received, although it has since been included in many of the editions of this story.

Of the making of editions of *Robinson Crusoe* there is no end. Nearly every year sees a new edition, with original illustrations. A noteworthy edition is that of Tyson's, published in London, with many fine engravings from designs by Granville, and another in 1820 in two volumes, with engravings by Charles Heath.

A fine edition of *Robinson Crusoe* in two volumes was issued by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston in 1908, with illustrations from designs by Thomas Stothard.

The standard life of Defoe is that by Wm. Hazlitt, published in London (1840–1843) in three volumes. Sir Walter Scott edited a good edition of Defoe's complete works in 1840, in twenty volumes. About fifteen years ago J. M. Dent of London issued a fine edition of Defoe's works, with an excellent introduction to each book. A good selection of some of Defoe's best work is *Masterpieces of Defoe*, issued by the Macmil-

lan Company in a series of prose masterpieces of great authors.

"There are few books one can read through and through so,
With new delight, either on wet or dry day,
As that which chronicles the acts of Crusoe,
And the good faith and deeds of his man Friday."

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

Swift foretold very accurately the great vogue that *Gulliver's Travels* would have. In writing to Arbuthnot he said: "I will make over all my profits (in a certain work) for the property of *Gulliver's Travels* which, I believe, will have as great a run as John Bunyan." The success of the book when issued anonymously in November, 1726, was enormous. Swift derived his chief satisfaction from the fact that he had hoodwinked many readers. Arbuthnot told of an acquaintance who had tried to locate Lilliput on a map and another told him of a shipmaster who had known Gulliver well. Many editions of the book were called for in England, and in France it had a great success and was dramatized.

A large paper copy of the first edition, with Swift's corrections on the margin, which appeared in later editions, is now in the South Kensington Museum. It shows how carefully Swift revised the work, as the changes are numerous. Toward the close of 1726 the work was reissued, with a second volume. In 1727 appeared the first new edition of both volumes. Swift's changes were mainly in "Laputa," which had been severely criticized. On Dec. 28, 1727, Swift in a letter suggests illustrations for the new edition and says of the book: "The world glutted itself with that book

at first, but now it will go off but soberly, but I suppose will not be soon worn out."

A Dublin edition of 1735 contained many corrections and it also included a "Letter from Gulliver to his cousin Simpson," a device of Swift to mystify the public and make it believe in the genuineness of Gulliver.

The best life of Swift is in two volumes, by Henry Craik (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1894). The best short life is by Leslie Stephen in the *English Men of Letters Series*.

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